

Essex Churches Together

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Our Mission: "Essex Churches Together is a Christian group united in partnership to provide and coordinate resources and services to assist all Essex County residents in need."

We Choose a Direction

ECT Decides to Focus on Development of a Response System in Time of Disaster

Essex Churches Together (ECT) has been meeting over the past year to discern the various needs of residents in Essex County. Sixteen churches have sent representatives to join together to "partner with Christ" in helping residents of Essex County.

Over the months there have been many speakers from the community telling ECT of the needs in the community and the efforts now in place to try to meet those needs. We have also learned what different churches are presently doing as their outreach in the community.

For the sake of discussion, and for choosing which areas on which we will focus our energy, the needs were grouped into the following categories:

The need for food and clothing- many churches already have periodic drives to collect goods to be distributed either from their church or through Community Services. Antioch Baptist has an active meals/food distribution ministry. Others have a food pantry or clothing closet. Upper Essex sponsors "Hunters for the Hungry." Some churches have

volunteers who help with Meals-on-Wheels. Community Services, directed by Mrs. Oster, is a central depository and distribution center that utilizes USDA food as well as collections.

The need for adequate housing- some churches have individuals who volunteer to make repairs, do small jobs; Vauter's has provided wells for some with duPont grant money; Larry Van Doren is speaking to groups in the community about developing a Habitat for Humanity. Bay Agency on Aging is a resource that is not well-known to the community.

The need for a structured, coordinated plan for disaster relief- presently Rappahannock Community Services and individual churches respond to individual needs the best they can but the notification is usually word-of-mouth referral from Social Services or chance visits by the needy. There is no Red Cross in the county nor is there any formal grassroots communication network in case of a large-scale disaster such as a large fire or weather catastrophe.

The need to help the elderly with issues such as housing, access to medication, adequate food and heat, oversight of health issues- those who have been in homes around the county whether as case workers or delivering meals-on-wheels, or other contact are appalled at the living conditions and needs of some of our elderly residents. They don't know how to ask for help, or are too proud, or are mentally or physically unable to secure proper support.

The need to support Rappahannock Community Services- The building is adequate at present and the service is established in the community but more volunteer, regular staff is needed to allow more frequent access to the supplies and services that are available. More publicity and support is needed to the churches about supplying food and clothing and other housekeeping items.

The need for volunteers to support the Bay Aging Adult Day Care- at present only Tappahannock Presbyterian church has a regular day each week to visit. More involvement from the community is needed to support the clients and to show support from the community when seeking further funding.

The need for assistance in applying for free or discounted medications- many people qualify but are unable to fill out the necessary paper work.

The need for mentoring young people and troubled adults- Officials from both the court system and the school

system see this as imperative for preparing people who have been exposed only to undesirable role-models to adequately cope. This is key in preventing repeat poverty and crime.

ECT Focus for 2005-2006

ECT will gather resources to help establish a response plan for individual and large-scale disaster.

This will include, but not be limited to, a re-institution of a local Red Cross chapter. It will also include increasing support to the Tappahannock Community Center, presently sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tappahannock.

A second area of focus will be the **continued coordination of food and clothing collections.** Distribution may still be through Rappahannock Community Services and individual churches. ECT will continue to respond to specific needs as identified by Mrs. Oster or other church representatives. ECT will work closely with Social Services evaluating needs and identifying recipients.

Each of the 8 areas of need remain important to address. We will continue to encourage and communicate with the churches about where volunteers are needed.

Positive Outcomes of ECT

During the first year of ECT specific requests, for example infant clothing and blankets, have been responded to. A special food drive served to augment the services of the Central Virginia Food Bank when supplies ran low. The food collected went straight to our residents who depend on this source.

Congregations have been made aware of some of the needs in Essex County through their ECT representatives, and they have responded. For example, Angel Visit Baptist Church has identified about 15 people interested in serving in different ways throughout the county, and they have been

given the names and numbers of contact personnel. Tappahannock Memorial UMC has identified drivers for meals-on-wheels.

One of the most exciting outcomes is the special bond developing within the group as members of different races and denominations come together to reach out to their brothers and sisters in Christ.

THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be the usual fourth Tuesday of the month, May 24, at 7:30 PM in the Essex Public Library.

Participating Churches

Antioch Baptist, Angel Visit Baptist, Beale Memorial Baptist, First Baptist in Loretto, First Baptist, Grace Episcopal, Mt. Zion Baptist, Lebanon Methodist, Rappahannock Christian, Seventh-day Adventist, St. John Baptist, St. John's Episcopal, St. Timothy's Catholic, Tappahannock Memorial United Methodist, Tappahannock Presbyterian, Upper Essex Baptist, Vauter's Episcopal, and Zion Baptist have all been represented. There is also an at-large constituency of interested citizens of Essex.

Back Newsletter Issues

If you would like another copy of the first two newsletters call Alice Roye (443-2021) or email alicer@inna.net. They can be sent quickly and inexpensively by email attachment.

What Have We Done so Far?

- We sponsored a very successful canned food drive last October.
- We communicated to other churches about activities in our individual churches so that all congregations can be invited.
- We developed and distributed a *Resource Directory* to all participating churches.
- We recruited drivers for Meals-on-Wheels and are continuing to search for more.

- We are supporting an effort to establish a Habitat for Humanity chapter in Essex County by getting the word out through our churches
- We are working closely with Social Services in advertising their services such as medical transportation, and we will be using their expertise in screening.
- We are searching for more volunteer personnel to help Mrs. Oster at the Rappahannock Community Service Center so that it can be open more than two part-days a week.

Newsletter Articles

A short article is sent out after most of our meetings that can be used as announcements in the Sunday Service and/or the church newsletter. ECT representatives who have email receive these. To increase our efficiency we ask that the person at the church who writes the newsletter contact Susan Walters (susanbw@inna.net or 443-8212) with your name and title, email address, and mailing address. She will send this monthly article to you by email, preferably, or by post.

A Note to the Clergy[†]

Please encourage a member of your church to take responsibility to represent your church at all of the meetings. If the regular representative is unable to attend a substitute should come in order to keep the communication open to all churches.

Encourage your representative to report on the progress of the organization, and encourage response to specific requests for help in the community.

