

Essex Churches Together

Volume 4 Number 1

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ECT Celebrates Its Third Year

"This is how we've come to understand and experience love. Christ sacrificed His life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not be just out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears and you made it disappear."" 1 John 3:16- 18 The Message.

Part of a devotion given by Sylvia Massie, representative from Tappahannock Memorial United Methodist Church

Every month representatives from Essex churches gather to share, pray, inform, and carry messages back to their congregations about needs in the community. Every church is invited to attend. Currently there have been 16 churches represented in ECT: Antioch Baptist (Charlie Layne), Angel Visit Baptist (Kay Beale), Beale Baptist (Nancy Lowery), First Baptist (James Cary), Ephesus Baptist (Hannah Healy), Grace Episcopal (Mary Hill), Lebanon Methodist (Kathy Krom), Rappahannock Christian (Etta Davis), Seventh-Day Adventist (Kathy Grenier), St. John's Episcopal (Martha Frank, Randy Brown), St. Timothy's Catholic (Ken Brown, Mary Lynne Krusz), Tappahannock Memorial United Methodist (Sylvia Massie, Ginnie Flaherty), Tappahannock Presbyterian (Kathy Hughes, Alice Roye), Trinity Methodist (Barbara Harmon), Upper Essex Baptist (Mayre Frances Moore), Zion Baptist (Stanley Clark). In addition there are members-at-large representing Community Services, the Free Health Clinic, the Red Cross, the Hanger, and Social Services.

Response to Disaster

How churches can respond to disaster in Essex County has been the focus of ECT for the past few years. This included such activities as encouraging monetary and food contributions to the 7th-Day Community Services Food Bank and Antioch Baptist Food Bank. Special needs such as school clothes or blankets were announced and the churches responded from their own congregations.

Some churches have instituted programs within their own church in response to needs discussed at ECT. For example Angel Visit Baptist has started a mentoring program for children. Volunteers have been recruited for the Free Health Clinic, Meals-on-Wheels, and Community Services. There has been support in trying to establish a Red Cross unit in Essex

County. Several representatives went to another county to receive training in citizens' response to disaster. ECT is a member of VOAD, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. ECT has supplied an inventory of possible resources and services of area churches in an emergency to Larry Smith, Director of Emergency Services in Essex County.

Residents of the Maryfield subdivision have developed a plan for response to disaster within their own neighborhood and this was shared with representatives to take back to their congregations.

Presently, ECT members are urging the community to participate in CERTS - the Civilian Emergency Response Training course offered through the county. Larry Smith should be contacted directly to register for this program.

New Directions

In 2007 the goal of ECT was shifted somewhat to concentrate on how the churches could help the elderly and youth in the community. Representatives are looking at ways to incorporate both populations. ECT has kept up with the progress made by the Hanger project for teens and there is a representative from that group who gives regular monthly updates and shares needs and ways in which churches can support this ecumenical ministry to youth.

In March a program on **Operation Inasmuch** (OIAM) was presented and since that time representatives have been charged to take the information back to their churches and evaluate interest in the "one-day mission blitz." This is the focus of ECT at the present time. This event will occur sometime in the spring of 2008. The scope of the project is dependent upon the response from the churches.

In May letters were sent to all of the churches in Essex County, either to the pastor or priest or to the Clerk or Administrator of the church. Pastors were invited to come and hear about **Operation Inasmuch**. The Rev. Bill Morris from the Presbyterian church, Rev Mike Payne from Tappahannock Memorial Methodist, and Rev. Jan Oberdick of Lebanon and Trinity attended.

Operation Inasmuch

Jesus said "*inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.*"
Matthew 25:40

Operation Inasmuch is based on that scripture. It is a planned, one-day event of doing for others, in many different ways. It can be carried out by a large congregation or by many churches throughout the community. This is how ECT sees it happening in Essex County.

People from different churches work together in the name of Christ and in fellowship with one another to meet some of the needs of people in Essex County.

ECT Prayer for Essex County

Dear God, we give you thanks for the beauty of our surrounds and for all of your people who live and work in our community. We ask your blessing for our highways and byways, that you would keep us safe and strong and prayerful as we go about our daily tasks. We pray that you will keep us ever mindful of your grace, and that we will always look to your first in all that we undertake. We ask all this for Essex County, in the name of your son, Jesus our Lord. Amen

Sample Projects for Operation Inasmuch

1. Backyard Bible Club for children-gathering of children from a neighborhood or trailer park for games, entertainment, and Bible stories. Excellent project for teenagers.
2. Sewing projects- blankets for homeless persons, turbans for cancer patients, prayer shawls, wheelchair bags
3. Home repairs- plumbing, electrical, roofing, painting, repair of windows, porches, steps.
4. Wheelchair ramps- construction either in partnership with local agency or as a stand-alone project.
5. Yard work for elderly or disabled
6. Assembly projects- packages such as hygiene kits for homeless persons, for Red Cross shelters; school supply kits; stuffed animals for abused or frightened children
7. Collection of food, clothing- then a free give away on the event day
8. Blood drive
9. Preparation of lunches for volunteers

There are many, many more kinds of projects. Churches will come up with needs, as will Bay Aging, Social Services, Community Services, other agencies. Some Essex churches already are involved with mission projects and people from other churches may pitch in to help with those that day. If an initiative is already in place, for example a prison ministry, that might be one of the activities for that day.

To Learn More...

Pastors and interested members of the congregation of **ALL ESSEX COUNTY CHURCHES** are urged to attend the regular 4th Tuesday meeting- **September 25- at 7:30 PM at the Essex Public Library**. There are DVD's and literature about the project available for loan. See www.operationinasmuch.com for more information.

The Rev. David Crocker, initiator of this program some 14 years ago, will lead the training workshop. The date of this event will be publicized. At that time concrete plans will be made for the big day of mission. There will be months of planning and preparation preceding this glorious event of openly serving people in Essex County the name of Jesus Christ.

Support for Community Services

For a number of years the 7th-day Adventist Church has sponsored the Community Services Center in Tappahannock. It is located behind the Pizza Hut. Because of too few volunteers the Center is only open 2 days a week. This serves several hundred families every month with food, clothing, and other supplies and home furnishings. Members from other churches have begun to help over there. Sorting and organizing food and clothes, helping with special drives, and re-modeling and repairs are just some of the activities done by the other church volunteers. Community Services is headed up by Mrs. Tove Oster, an ad hoc member of ECT.

Free Health Clinic

ECT churches have furnished phone service for the clinic for a couple of years. In addition, volunteers have been secured and "wish lists" have been distributed to the churches to help furnish the new clinic. Dr. Neils Oster regularly attends ECT meetings and reports on this.

Churches have been asked to help get the word out about the availability of this service to people without insurance. At present it is open every Monday afternoon from 3:00 to 6:00 PM.

Church Choirs Sing for RivahFest

Several ECT choirs sang at different intervals in St. John's Episcopal Church during RivahFest Day in June. This was well received by the public and a rewarding experience for the choirs. Other such efforts may be explored in the near future.

Lord, remind us that every way we serve is important to you. Give us a servant's heart and serving hands that glorify you as we reach out to Your children in need in our community. Guide our thoughts and actions as we gather here tonight to ask what needs to be done and seek ways that we as the Body of Christ can open doors to those needs in our community. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen

Devotion by Sylvia Massie, TMUMC

This list is repeated for churches to make available to their congregations as we enter another hurricane season.

Disaster Supply Kit

- Water
1 gallon per person pr day, for 3-5 days (1/2 for drinking, 12 for sanitation and cooking)
- Food
3-5 day supply of food- requiring minimal water, no refrigeration, preparation or cooking (canned foods, granola bars, trail mix etc.
Manual can opener
- First Aid Kits
Prescription and non-prescription medications, extra eyeglasses and contact lenses, pre-packaged first aid kit
- Records and financial documents
- Cash (small bills) or traveler's checks
- Credit card
- Extra set of car keys in a waterproof container
- Originals of important documents- in a safe place
- Emergency phone numbers
- Sanitation Supplies
Toilet paper, soap, garbage bags, plastic bags with seals, 5-, gallon bucket with lid, disinfectant, pre-moistened towelettes, feminine hygiene products and diapers
- Clothing and Bedding
One complete change of clothing, sturdy footwear, sleeping bag (or 2 blankets) per person
- Other items
Games, toys and books
Pet supplies (food, water, carriers, etc.)
Comfort/care items unique to infant, elderly and disabled family members
Extra set of keys
- Survival tools and equipment
Battery-powered radio, flashlight, extra bulbs and batteries, call letters and dial settings of your local Emergency Alert System stations taped on your radio and TV
Wrenches, duct tape, a whistle and a utility knife, a road map, cell phone.

VA Dept. of Health- Distributed by Essex Churches Together

A letter to all churches in Essex County

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

Each of us who profess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior are charged to serve as the hands and feet of our Lord as we serve and witness to others. If we say we are Christians we have pledged to follow his commandment- that we love one another as he has loved us.

Most of the churches in Essex County, regardless of race or denomination, are small. Volunteer time and resources are scarce, and those who actively live out their commitment to others find themselves stretched to the limit. This is how Essex Churches Together came to be. Several months of prayerful consideration and discussion among members of different congregations in 2004 resulted in combining talents and resources to increase fellowship among Christians and serve those who are in need, whether to change a light bulb or deliver a meal or repair a roof.

If your church is represented we hope your representative is working with you to convey the information from the monthly meetings. Their names are listed in this newsletter. Pastors are welcome and urged to come to the meetings and see and hear about this lay initiative.

If your church is not represented we hope you will come and also ask someone in your congregation to attend the next meeting of ECT on Tuesday, September 25 at 7:30 PM at the Essex Public Library. If we can answer questions of you or your congregation please come to the meeting, or call us. Kathy Hughes 443-2198 Alice Roye 443-2021

*Let us grow in grace and in the knowledge and service of our Lord Jesus Christ.
To him be the glory now and forever. Amen.*

Essex Churches Together

P. O. Box 980

Tappahannock, VA 22560

(804) 443-2021 or 443-2198

