

"TURNING THOSE IN CRISIS TOWARD CHRIST"

Emergency Chaplains

FEBRUARY 2026



Executive Director's Report

Ralph Thompson

In recent weeks, I have had to say goodbye to two friends who helped shape Emergency Chaplains in meaningful ways.

On January 27, we lost a faithful friend and steady ministry partner in Fred Bays. Fred served behind the scenes at Emergency Chaplains by helping with our newsletter mailings. This is the first newsletter we've prepared in many years without Fred sharing his wisdom and humor as we worked.

During the pandemic, when routines were disrupted and gatherings had stopped, Fred remained consistent. He would come by the office, pick up the newsletters, take them home, and assemble them for mailing. It was not visible work, but it was faithful work.

Though he lived in Cary, Fred never forgot where he came from. A son of the mountains of Southwest Virginia, he stayed closely connected to his roots. He invested personally in Wise County as a business owner and served on the board of UVA/Wise, his alma mater. When the coal economy declined,



Fred felt it deeply and suffered significant financial loss, yet he remained loyal to the region and the people he loved.

Fred was also a steady friend to me. I am grateful for his encouragement and faithful presence.

Please pray for his wife, Teresa, and for the many family members and friends who will miss him deeply.

On December 27, 2025, we said goodbye to Chaplain Rick Freeman after his long battle with cancer. Rick was one of the earliest chaplains to complete our certification process and helped shape Emergency Chaplains in its formative years. He believed in the mission and invested himself in it.

For decades, Rick worked in radio and voiceover. Many of you have heard his voice in our videos — he became, quite literally, the voice of Emergency Chaplains. He brought excellence to that work without ever drawing attention to himself.

More than anything, Rick loved Jesus and wanted others to know Him. Even through cancer, he remained steady in his faith.

Rick was my friend. I will miss his voice, his encouragement, and the way he stood with us in the work.

We are grateful for the years God gave us with Fred and Rick, and we rest in the promise that they are now fully healed in the presence of the Savior they loved.

Emergency Chaplains has been shaped by faithful men like them. I thank God for their lives, their friendship, and their steadfast commitment to this ministry. May we honor Fred and Rick's memory by carrying the work forward with the same steadiness and devotion they modeled.

BECOME A CHAPLAIN

The need is growing.
We can provide the training.
Sign up today!

EChap.org/training

GIVE MONTHLY TO ECHAP

Your support keeps us on the field to serve First Responders and citizens in crisis.

EChap.org/donate

JOIN THE ECHAP PRAYER TEAM

Pray for our
First Responders, Public Safety Agencies,
and our Chaplains.

EChap.org/pray

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2025 Ministry & Activity Report

In 2025, Emergency Chaplains expanded both reach and response across North Carolina. We now serve with **105 chaplains in 30 counties**, continuing our commitment to provide calm, gospel-centered presence in moments of crisis.

Chaplain Activity at a Glance

- 439 death calls
- 210 additional crisis responses
- 2,629 counseling opportunities
- 617 gospel conversations
- 529 station visits
- 117 ride-alongs

Our Durham County Crisis Response Team alone logged more than **1,800 volunteer hours** responding directly to families during some of their hardest days.

Throughout the year, chaplains:

- Provided meals for EMS continuing education events
- Taught death notification at EMS Academy, Police Academy, and Sheriff’s Academy sessions
- Met regularly with 9-1-1 communicators
- Participated in multiple Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD)

Durham Area Seminar Saturday, April 18, 2026

Intentional Neighboring *Responding to Everyday Crisis*

Join Emergency Chaplains as we host our free Intentional Neighboring seminar at Parkside Baptist Church in Durham (9:00am–1:00pm)

This practical training equips ordinary believers to care for friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers when life suddenly falls apart.

You will learn a biblical model for crisis care, why crisis moments open doors for ministry, what to say (and not say), and simple steps any believer can use to offer the love and comfort of Christ.

If you want to be better prepared when someone’s world is shaken, this seminar is for you.

Get more info and sign up today:

EChap.org/care

CHAPLAIN FIELD REPORTS

In this section, we often share several field reports—stories of chaplains serving families and supporting first responders across North Carolina. For this issue, however, we want to focus on one particular call from February 12—an incident that many of you may have seen covered in the news.

Around 5:30 p.m., first responders were dispatched to a home on Chartwell Court in Durham where two small children were found unresponsive; one child died and the other was hospitalized. When the children’s father arrived home from work, he found his street filled with police cars, fire apparatus, and ambulances. In that moment, all we

could tell him was that his wife and children had been taken to the hospital — and he needed to go there immediately.

Chaplains were on scene within minutes. One transported the father to the hospital while two others deployed there to care for family members. In the days that followed, chaplains conducted individual debriefings and provided follow-up care for officers, firefighters, medics, 9-1-1 communicators, and extended family members trying to process the shock.

Incidents like this do not end when the crime scene tape comes down.

They affect the family whose world has collapsed, the officers, medics, and firefighters who walked into the carnage, performed CPR on children, and the communicators who listened to the screams over the phone. This is why chaplain presence matters — at the scene, at the hospital, and in the difficult days that follow.

The Kitchen Table

A free weekly Peer Support ZOOM chat focusing on current and former First Responders who have survived or are undergoing treatment for various cancers.

For More information contact

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