

# Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guidebook



**Lutheran Disaster Response**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

Photo: FEMA/Andrea Booher

This guidebook is prepared in several sections, but should be looked at as a whole.

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# A Preparedness Guidebook

The purpose of this guidebook is to help congregations take some basic and important steps toward resiliency and intentionality in response to disaster so that they will be better able to serve their communities when disasters strike.

## WHO IS THIS GUIDEBOOK FOR?

Disasters affect almost every aspect of life. For that reason, many types of leaders in congregations will likely find the information in this guidebook helpful from those serving on congregation councils interested in good business practices, to hands-on work crew leaders interested in safety when cleaning out homes, to pastors and other spiritual leaders who are interested in learning how to address spiritual crises of those affected, to anyone interested in building resilience in their community.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK

The goal of this guidebook is for a congregation to develop a written plan that is comprehensive, approved by leadership, taught to members of the community, exercised and renewed regularly. You may find, however, that this goal is best achieved in steps that grow over time and through many conversations.

Throughout this guidebook, leaders will find strategies for disaster preparedness:

- Have a mindset for disaster preparedness
- Know the gifts and resources of the congregation and individuals in your community
- Build relationships within your community
- Care for yourselves so that you are equipped to care for others

This guidebook begins with an overview of foundational information about disasters including descriptions of the roles that the Lutheran Disaster Response program, synods, social ministry organizations, congregations, individuals, emergency management and other community organizations may play in a disaster.

“Developing a Congregational Preparedness Plan” outlines a step-by-step process for congregations to create their unique preparedness plan. Worksheets located in the Appendix correspond to the planning process and will create a congregation’s custom preparedness plan.

The section, “Response,” addresses the long-term recovery process of how congregations, communities and individuals achieve a new normal.

The sections “Emotional and Spiritual Care” and “Worship in times of disaster” provide specific tools for spiritual leaders in congregations who may be asked difficult questions about the role of God in a disaster. This section recognizes that even in the midst of disaster and the ensuing chaos, God calls the church to spiritual and emotional care for the community along with prayer and worship.

Finally, this guidebook offers a section that includes a glossary of terms, links to additional resources and a format for assembling the worksheets to create your own custom preparedness plan.

# Introduction

Disasters vary in scope and cause. They can be the work of humans or triggered by natural disasters. Disasters might be caused by natural events like floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and epidemics. Disasters change and redefine communities in positive and negative ways.

## UNDERSTANDING DISASTER

### WHAT IS A DISASTER?

The impact of any event is dependent not only on the cause of the crisis, but also the environment to which the crisis comes. Many variables affect the community's ability to return quickly to everyday life: population density, time of year, the frequency with which such events occur, lead time before the crisis strikes and whether the event also affected neighboring communities.

*For the purpose of this guidebook, a disaster is defined as an event beyond the control of those affected, which causes great harm, suffering, and damage and for which those who are affected need outside assistance in order to sustain and rebuild their lives.*

We begin with the assumption that disasters will occur. There will always be devastating events that catch us off-guard and that overwhelm the resources of families, communities and economic and governmental systems, and that challenge our ideas about God and religion.

### WHY WOULD A CONGREGATION PLAN FOR DISASTER?

Congregations proclaim the gospel in many ways in the community in which they live: worship, vision planning, social ministry, youth programs and much more. When a crisis or disaster arises and God's people are hurting and scared, God gives us the gift to share the hope and promise of new life in the midst of devastation.

According to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Social Statement on Church in Society, "Because the gospel of Jesus Christ liberates us from sin, death and evil, the church as the body of Christ is freed to "love the neighbor" (Matthew 22:36).<sup>1</sup> The call of God motivates the church to reach into the world, to be full participants in community, and to care for the earth with all its creatures.

**When something happens in our community, our neighbors will be knocking on our doors whether or not we are prepared to step up to the needs.** It also makes sense to be prepared to care for the people, buildings, information, programs, networks and other resources that are important to us and our community.

<sup>1</sup> [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%Repository/Church\\_SocietySS.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%Repository/Church_SocietySS.pdf)



### **ANSWERING THE KNOCK AT THE DOOR**

*Reformation Lutheran Church in West Long Branch, New Jersey was already serving the community in several ways before Hurricane Sandy hit on October 2012. Many people that had participated in its outreach programs and more than 20 member families in the congregation suffered loss of property – some suffering the complete loss of their homes and businesses.*

*Reformation’s power was restored 48 hours after the storm, and they quickly began putting the word out that the congregation was here to help. People came from all around to charge electronics, cook a meal in the kitchen, warm up or find emergency help. The pantry and clothes closet increased hours to seven days a week. Emergency food rations and water were received from the County Food Bank and blankets and other items were distributed.*

*Reformation also began hosting recovery workers – people coming from all over the eastern U.S. to help rebuild as our communities recovered following the storm. Meals and shelter were provided by the church and a shower trailer was provided by Lutheran Disaster Response.*

*The Rev. Matthew Cimorelli, pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church says, “Our congregations have had to rearrange some of our ministry activities and we’ve had to work around volunteer groups at times in order to do our “regular”*

*ministry activities, but the blessing of serving in this new and vital way has far outweighed any such challenges.”*

### **INTENTIONALITY IS KEY**

In order for a congregation to confidently and faithfully offer its resources in the midst of disaster, the congregation itself needs to be able to build resiliency to weather the storm.

Intentional preparation for disaster requires attention to many details: keeping insurance policies updated, creating communication plans, encouraging members to stock emergency supplies at home, keeping the church building and grounds maintained and building community relationships. This guidebook will lead you through the details.

### **Resilience describes the ability to recover and adjust in times of stress, misfortune or changes.**

Resilience is seen in communities that band together, pool resources and find creative solutions in tough times. Resilience doesn’t just happen; it is developed in strong relationships and healthy functioning over time.

**“ISN’T THAT WHAT WE’RE SUPPOSED TO DO?”**

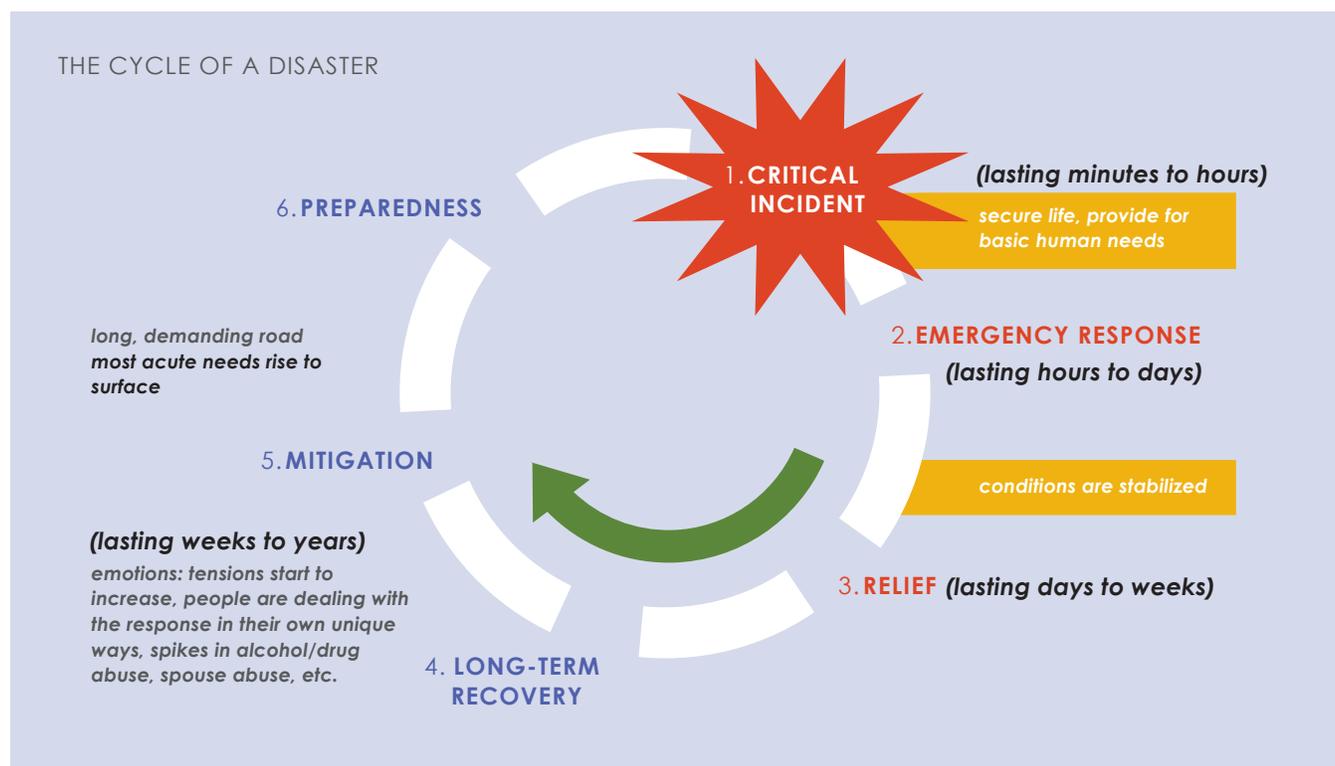
*At the request of the local Lutheran Disaster Response coordinator, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in East Stroudsburg, Pa., assisted an older couple whose simple dwelling had been declared a total loss after a tree fell on their roof during Hurricane Sandy. Not only did members find alternative housing for the couple for three months, assistance was also provided for obtaining groceries and doing laundry. A member, who was a licensed contractor, determined that the house could be salvaged, so he helped them appeal the decision by the insurance company and oversaw the repairs while other members helped clean out the home. In addition, one member arranged for the couple’s beloved cat to receive its vaccinations so it could be boarded with a vet. Whenever the Lutheran Disaster Response coordinator expressed thanks or compliments to anyone in the congregation, the reply was, “Isn’t that what we are supposed to do?”*

**UNDERSTANDING THE CYCLE OF A DISASTER**

A disaster is not an event that has a discrete beginning and end. There is often a time of anticipation before the event occurs. Once a disaster does strike, the people involved tend to go through fairly predictable stages. The chart below helps to visualize what is meant by the cycle of disaster:

**These stages are best understood as a continual cycle:**

1. **Critical incident** will vary in length and severity
2. **Emergency response** occurs immediately after a disaster and can last minutes, hours or days. This stage includes search and rescue, emergency shelters and feeding programs, grief counseling, pastoral care, volunteer services and reestablishing contact with family and friends.
3. **Relief** starts 12 to 72 hours after a disaster and is characterized by debris removal and clean up, damage assessments, temporary repairs, applications for assistance, community needs assessment, decisions and organization for recovery.
4. **Long-term recovery** begins three to five days after a disaster and can last months to years. This stage is characterized by permanent repairs and rebuilding, bureaucratic complications, volunteer projects and agency coordination.
- 5/6. **Mitigation and preparedness** can help to lessen the severity of the impact of future events increasing the speed and efficiency of rescue, assessment and relief.



**MITIGATION FOR THE KELLER FAMILY**

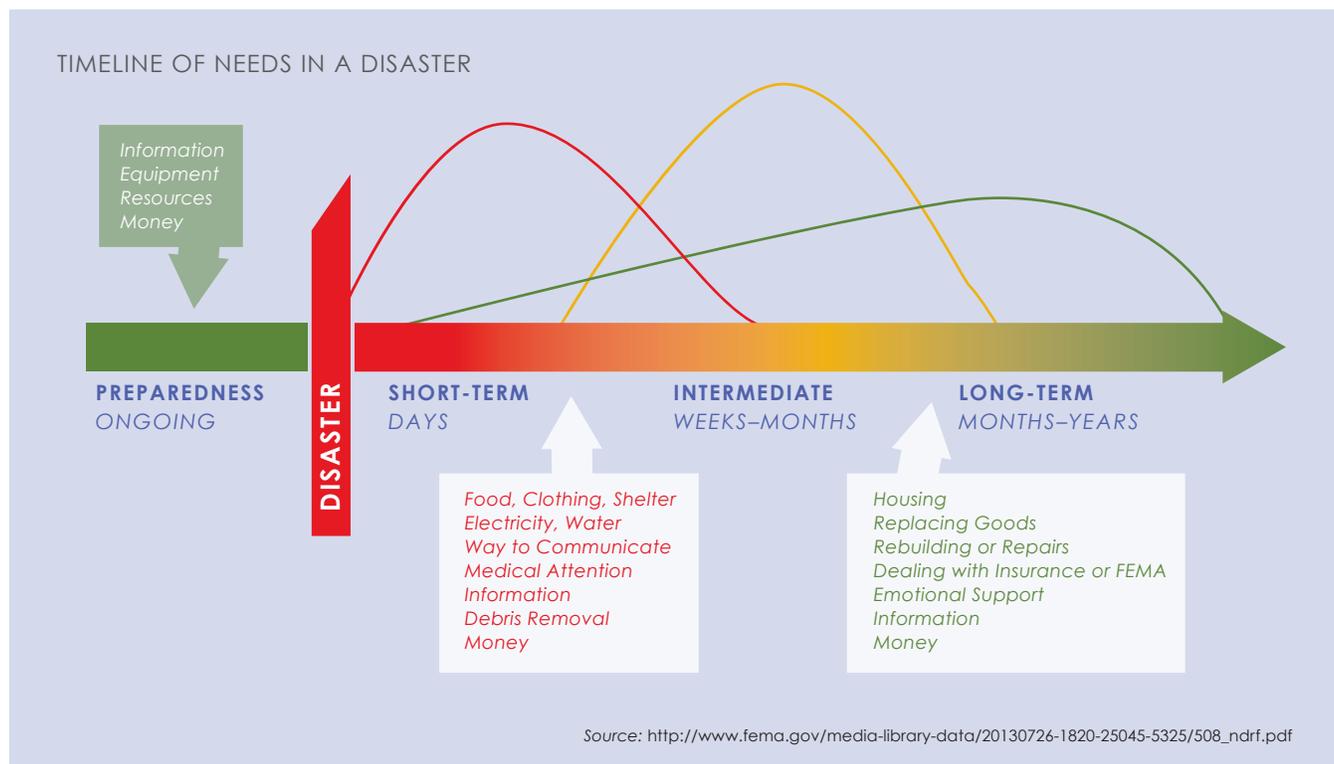
While rebuilding after experiencing the second devastating flood of their house in five months, the Keller family took the following steps: 1) They elevated their furnace and water heater in the basement. 2) Instead of putting up drywall with nails, they screwed paneling into place on the walls. 3) Instead of gluing down the linoleum in their living room/dining room, they simply laid it down and placed the furniture on top of it. When the next flood threatened 12 months later they pulled up a truck, moved what they could to the second floor, loaded the rest of the furniture in the truck and rolled up the linoleum and put that in the truck and drove it all to higher ground. After the flood they unscrewed the paneling, took out the insulation, sprayed and dried out behind it, put in new insulation, screwed back the paneling, rolled out the linoleum and set up house again.

**Mitigation:** In disaster work *mitigation* often refers to steps taken to prevent or lessen the impact of a potentially destructive event. For example, in areas subject to flooding, such steps might include elevating a house or at least locating the electrical panel, heater, furnace on the first floor instead of the basement. *Mitigation* can also refer to activity taken by recovery workers to help victims of a disaster acquire the needed goods and services for relief and recovery.

**A TIMELINE OF DISASTER NEEDS**

Another way to think about the preparedness and recovery is as a continuum of needs. This is illustrated below with a graphic from the National Disaster Recovery Framework, a guide developed by FEMA to promote effective recovery, particularly for those events that are large scale or catastrophic.

Pre-disaster preparedness can happen at any time that a community is operating under normal conditions. “Recovery” phases occur in the midst or aftermath of disaster, outside of normal (or what used to be normal) conditions. Short-term recovery focuses on meeting basic human needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Even while organizations like



the American Red Cross are providing short-term mass care/sheltering, other agencies and organizations like Lutheran Disaster Response are beginning to plan out and address the long-term needs and response of individuals and communities.

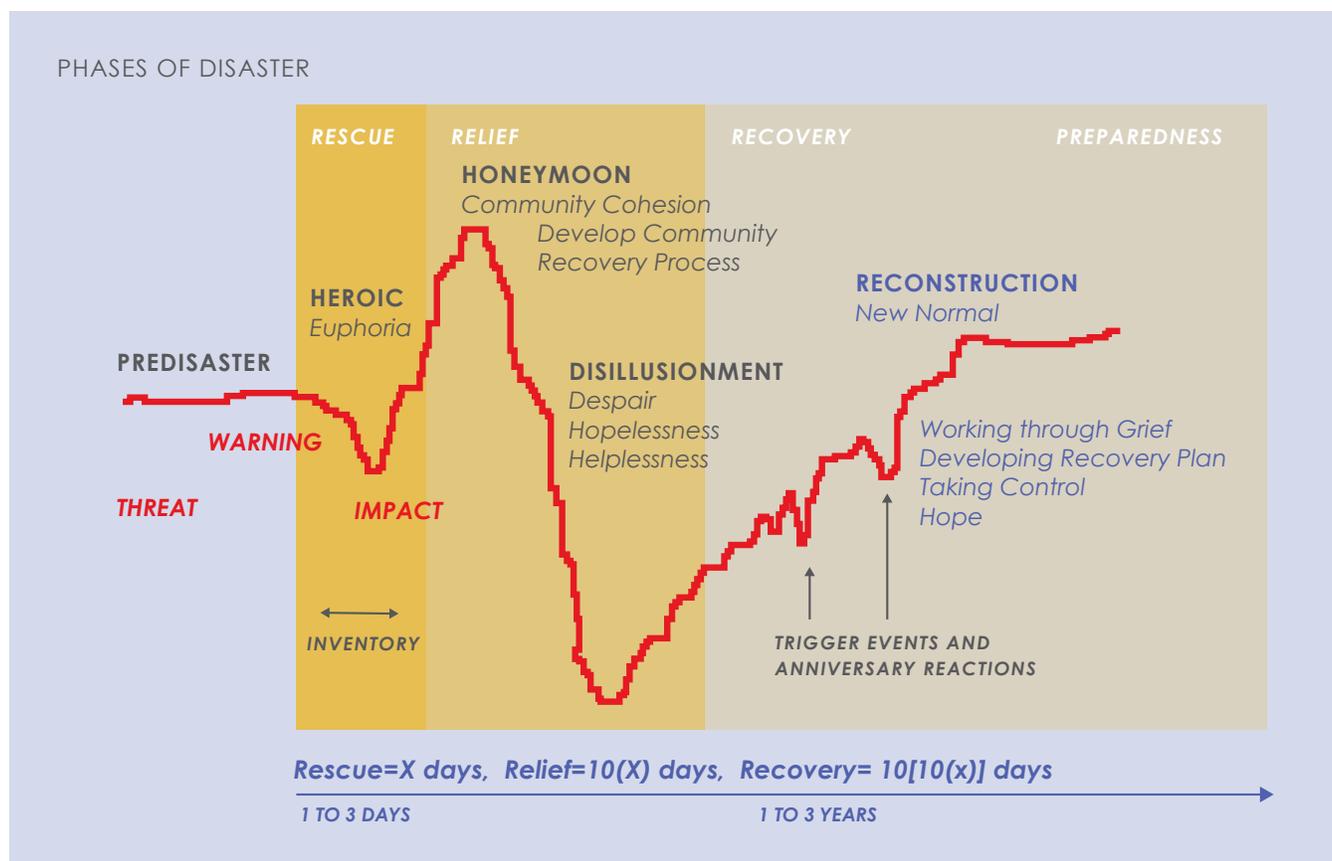
With its call to care for not only the physical needs of the community but also emotional and spiritual needs of the community, congregations also need to be aware of the emotional impact of a disaster.

Following the shock of the impact and assessment after disaster, there is often a spike in positive emotion and energy, a “can do” attitude. People often say, “We stick together and take care of our own. We’re not going to let this get us down!” As time wears on, the magnitude of the disaster starts to sink in and people become exhausted emotionally and physically. Challenges and problems that existed before the disaster are still present and even exacerbated. Snags in recovery efforts develop. Weaknesses in the systems become apparent. All these lead to a fairly rapid and steep drop into disillusionment, despair, hopelessness and helplessness. Sensitive

assistance to survivors of disaster can bring hope as long-term community processes develop. Gradually, people work through the grief, develop recovery plans and reach a new normal.

**ADVOCATING FOR RESOURCES**

*Following the second major flood in five months along the Delaware River in Pennsylvania, the case manager for the Long Term Recovery Committee made personal contact with homeowners along the river encouraging them to register with FEMA and ask for assistance from the Long Term Recovery Committee. Many responded, “We’re River Rats. We know how to handle this and we stick together. We don’t need to apply for help.” Three months later, when it was too late to register with FEMA, a number conceded that they really could not manage the recovery on their own and some asked the committee for assistance. When the next flood struck 15 months later, again devastating their homes, these people promptly registered with FEMA, went to the Disaster Recovery Center to check for available resources, and asked the committee for assistance.*



Recovery from disaster always takes longer than we anticipate and is dependent on any number of community variables. One suggested formula for estimating disaster response is the rule of 10.

Emergency response takes X days.

Short-term relief is estimated at 10X days.

Long-term recovery is estimated at 10(10X) days.

#### THE RULE OF TEN

For example, emergency response lasted approximately six days in New Jersey following Superstorm Sandy, which hit Oct. 29, 2012. Relief lasted approximately 60 days, through the end of the calendar year. Long-term recovery can be expected to take 600 days or nearly two years.

#### HOW DO LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS AND LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE FIT IN?

Local congregations can play a significant role in long-term recovery by discovering community needs and linking resources grounded in a call from God to love and care for all people. A congregation's location within the fabric of the local community makes it the primary location for preparedness and an essential expert on how the local community will benefit from Lutheran Disaster Response programs and long-term response.

But the congregation is never alone. Congregations are linked to local ecumenical faith communities, the synod and regional networks, local social ministry organizations and the national Lutheran Disaster Response ministry.

#### What is a social ministry organization?

The ELCA and 300 health and human service organizations, also known as social ministry organizations, participate in an alliance known as Lutheran Services in America ([www.lutheranservices.org](http://www.lutheranservices.org)), which serves more than 6 million people each year in the United States and the Caribbean.

Lutheran Disaster Response coordinates the efforts of the churchwide expression of the ELCA, synods, and social ministry organizations as each works to promote preparedness, provide spiritual and emotional care, volunteer coordination and long-term recovery resources to

**Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster is a coalition of voluntary agencies, including many faith groups, that encourages coordination, collaboration, cooperation and communication among member organizations around disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.** Often called VOAD for short, this organization is organized on the community, county, regional, state and national levels.

communities affected by disaster. Lutheran Disaster Response focuses efforts in two areas: long-term response and supporting congregations to partner for disaster preparedness and response in their own communities.

Most synods have disaster plans that will organize the synod to assist in the response. Synod offices connect churchwide gifts with local congregations and help to strengthen local coordination for response and communication. This disaster plan will include the local social ministry organizations that have affiliated with Lutheran Disaster Response in support of response efforts (See [www.ELCA.org/disaster](http://www.ELCA.org/disaster) to find your local social ministry organization affiliate). Social ministry organizations that have entered into a Statement of Understanding with the Lutheran Disaster Response program often have long standing connections with partners in the local Lutheran network, county-and state-level emergency management structures and communities. Many participate in their local or state Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster and have relationships with other disaster response agencies like American Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Methodist Committee on Relief and Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

Lutheran Disaster Response brings gifts of networking and resources. They provide grant funding to social ministry organizations and synods in support of local, long-term response. They assist in recovery by lifting up the stories of communities impacted by disaster throughout the whole church. Such stories spur the prayers of the church, help to raise funds for disaster response at a national level and invite engagement in a variety of ways.



Photo: FEMA/Carolyn Deming

### ***FILLING IN THE GAPS***

***On March 2, 2012, an EF-4 tornado struck Moscow, Ohio, killing three people and destroying 252 homes in five counties, with no FEMA disaster declaration and corresponding assistance. Immediately, the Lutheran churches held a spiritual care event where 3,000 people showed up. Three homes were built from the ground up, with the help of Lutheran Services of America Ohio and Lutheran Disaster Response. Over \$30,000 was given, 15,000 hours of volunteer labor served and Home Depot donated \$60,000 of materials. Each house was built with a safe room, hurricane strength shingles and hurricane straps for the next wind storm or tornado to strike the area.***

*Without governmental assistance, the community coordinated a response which included spiritual and emotional care, case management with Red Cross, volunteer coordination for debris removal, donation management, providing school kits and long-term case management. Both ELCA and Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod congregations supported this non-governmental disaster.*

***There are many gifts to share! Write down what your congregation’s might be.***

# Part One: Developing a Congregational Preparedness Plan

Developing a congregational preparedness plan is a process. As with most processes, it is not always linear and neat but grows organically as the community discovers its gifts and call to preparedness over time. While the recommendation is for each congregation to develop a comprehensive plan for the community that is owned, taught and exercised, this end goal will likely come in stages.

Task #1: Team, Purpose, Vision and Goals

Task #2: Designate Members for Response Team

Task #3: Conduct a Disaster Risk Assessment

Task #4: Inventory Assets

Task #5: Assessing Vulnerabilities

Task #6: Identify Partners, Agreements and Resources

Task #7: Decision Making Process

Task #8: Create a Communication Plan

Task #9: Emergency Operations

Task #10: Continuity of Ministries

Task #11: Obtain Congregational Approval

Task #12: Educate, Practice and Review

Task #13: Always Going Deeper

## OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

At first, a few leaders will see the importance of the preparedness plan. However, in order for a plan to be truly useful, congregational leaders, congregation council and staff must become aware of and committed to its importance. Over time, everyone should be committed to its importance for the ongoing utilization of the plan. Even so, as circumstances change, the plan will need to be updated, refreshed and re-introduced to the community.

Be assured, there is value in the process. No matter where you are in the journey toward a comprehensive preparedness plan, the conversations and discoveries you make along the way will assist you in responding when disaster strikes.

Ask people from your community who understand the importance of continuity planning to participate in the process. Think of those who are involved with businesses that have business continuity plans, with emergency management or who are first responders.

A variety of perspectives are valuable when planning. Each person will bring a unique perspective and wisdom to the “what if” scenarios. What if our facility caught fire? What if a tornado went through our town? One only needs to mention the latest national disaster to begin such a discussion.

Once the congregation’s leadership begins to identify vulnerabilities of their community, the congregation can form a team to make a plan to prevent or minimize damage as well as to respond to such an event. Note, it is important to not only imagine ways to prevent loss and get back to business, but also ways to respond to new opportunities for ministry that might present themselves, ways to nimbly answer God’s call.

This section of the guidebook is structured so that the congregation may enter and continue the preparedness process on many levels. **The goal of this guidebook is a written, comprehensive preparedness plan for the congregation that is approved by leadership, owned by the congregation and practiced and reviewed periodically.**

**Each section refers to worksheets on which you can capture relevant information and processes. Discussion questions after each section can assist you in conversation and reflection, even if the congregation has not yet committed to designing a plan.**

*Process isn’t always neat and linear. If you find yourself stuck in one area, move on with the promise to revisit the topic again later.*

WHAT DOES A COMPREHENSIVE PREPAREDNESS PLAN LOOK LIKE?

While each congregation is encouraged to make the plan fit its unique characteristics and needs, here’s a basic outline of what you will have if you follow this guidebook.

## *The Disaster Preparedness Plan*

- A. Vision and scope
- B. Description of the preparedness and response teams
- C. Steps to be taken for preparedness
- D. Response to threat and impact of disaster
- E. Approval of the plan
- F. Education, practice, review and adjustments
- G. Ongoing communication and refinement of the plan

**How do you get to such a plan? Simply put, with a good team.**

To begin, **form a preparedness team.** The preparedness team should consist of a variety of leaders who know the congregation, its structures of authority and resources. If the preparedness team is representative of the congregation and dedicated to collaboration, the work can be divided among its members who can, in turn, enlist others to help accomplish some of the tasks.

**The tasks of the preparedness team are to:**

1. Develop purpose, vision and goals
2. Designate members for a response team
3. Conduct a disaster risk assessment
4. Inventory assets
5. Assess vulnerabilities
6. Identify partners, agreements and resources
7. Decision making process
8. Create a communication plan
9. Emergency operations
10. Continuity of ministries
11. Obtain congregational approval
12. Educate, practice and review
13. Go deeper and refine



*While a congregation may be able to adapt or learn from a template or someone else's plan, it cannot just copy it, put it on a shelf and consider the work done. This is because plans are relevant and useful only if they are:*

1. Developed by people who are concerned
2. Tailored to the geographical situation and needs of the members
3. Implemented and tested to the extent possible, before a disaster strikes
4. Developed to include training for individuals responsible during an emergency
5. Reviewed and updated regularly

**In time, you will also create the foundation for a response team that will be engaged when the time of disaster comes.**

The response team includes individuals who will be key decision makers and implementers, will be activated in times of impending crisis or disaster and will continue to function until the situation is resolved. Tasks include making timely critical decisions, overseeing communication within the congregation and with the media, working with the insurance carrier, and whatever else becomes necessary for the particular disaster.

*Calvary Lutheran Church in West Chester, Pa., created a preparedness plan, even though they had never experienced a significant disaster. Norm recalled that the regional and national church bodies had encouraged congregations to consider making a plan. Additionally, current events in the United States stimulated his interest in addressing this matter. Norm was asked by the senior pastor to develop an Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response Plan for the congregation. Having 10 years of management experience in which he was responsible for the safety and well-being of site employees in his area of responsibility, Norm felt somewhat qualified to take on this task. Norm recruited other experienced members of the congregation to serve on a small team and then created the plan.*

This is important work! But putting together a disaster preparedness and response plan takes considerable time and energy from many people. It is important that leaders of the congregation not only commit to the process, but also carefully choose and faithfully support the people who will prepare it. Remember, this is a process that will emerge in stages. You may choose to write a simple plan to start and revisit it over time to expand and develop the plan.

As you write your plan, it is also important to understand for whom this plan is being written, who will read it. The plan itself will be used by leaders of the congregation, including those in charge of preparing for and responding to emergencies, crises and disaster. Like a congregation's constitution, the basic plan should be available to anyone who wishes to engage it. Therefore it needs to be explicit enough to clearly lay out expectations, responsibilities and procedures, while not getting bogged down in detail.

Specific procedures, such as instructions for evacuation, may be used to inform and train people who use the facilities and lead activities of the congregation. These, too, need to be clear and concise. These instructions need to be in the plan and communicated to the larger community.

Other pieces, such as the disaster risk assessment or lists of ministries or groups that use the facilities will also be used by leaders with specific responsibilities and will always be works in progress. There are pieces that only a select few need to have, particularly the parts of the plan that include policy numbers, passwords or personal contact information.

As you create your plan, consider what information needs to be available where and for whom. Include this on your worksheets as instructions for communication. The team can decide what information might better belong in a section of the appendix made available to leaders, as opposed in the main text of the plan.

**The best disaster plan is to prepare a process rather than a static document.** Planning for disaster will not be linear whereby one decision will directly follow a previous decision. The preparedness team can expect to leave some questions unanswered at first. Moving forward through the process, even with holes in the information, may offer wisdom with which to go back and refine.

*Now, let's get started.*

# Task #1: Form a Collaborative Team, Clarify Purpose, Vision, Parameters And Set Goals

See page 57 for this task worksheet.

## THE TEAM

The core group of the preparedness team will be in charge of making sure the congregation is ready to respond to a threat of and actual impact of a disaster. This team will also regularly review and update the disaster preparedness and response plan. The preparedness team should be small enough to permit close collaboration and large enough to be representative of necessary stakeholders within and associated with the congregation. The team should not place an undue burden on any single person. The pastor of the congregation is part of the team but should not be chairperson.

In the process of working together, members will develop a common framework and learn each other's vocabulary over time. The team needs to define and assign roles and responsibilities for its members such as: convener or chairperson, record keeper and designated communication person. For the task of creating a comprehensive preparedness plan, the team should agree to meet regularly. The number of meetings necessary to complete a plan will vary depending on the congregation.

*Who should be asked to be on the team? Look around in your congregation for people who would best understand preparedness and disaster, as well as how the congregation functions.*

Members might include:

1. A nurse or other medical professional
2. First responder (paramedic, fire fighter, police officer)
3. Member of the property committee
4. Someone who understands the church's finances
5. Person engaged in ministries with children and the aged

## PURPOSE AND VISION

Next, the team needs to engage in a discussion of its members' understandings and visions of Christian response to disasters in general and specifically for your community. This will enable the team to set its overall goals and define its parameters.

Consider what the congregation senses it is called to be. How might values be reflected in the disaster preparedness and response work? The mission statement of the congregation, synod and the ELCA may be helpful at this point.

Next, define the parameters of your work. Are you simply focusing on maintaining safety for occupants and possessions? Are you limiting your focus to response to needs within the congregation or expanding it to include the neighborhood, a wider area or even to a remote location? How large a situation would it take to initiate your response?

## GOAL SETTING

Finally, state the goals of the planning/preparedness team in broad and simple terms that reflect your congregation and can be agreed upon by each member of the team. These goals will help identify your highest priorities before, during and after a disaster. You may begin with your congregation's mission or vision statement or the working definition of your community's purpose. The goal of the preparedness team can then reflect how the congregation is prepared to continue on in that mission or vision even in the face of unexpected and traumatic circumstances.

*Example of goals might be:*

Protect the congregation's assets (human and otherwise)

Return to "normal" congregational life as quickly and simply as possible

Support impacted parishioners in their recovery

Reach out to vulnerable neighbors (near and far)

Protect and help people

Reestablish Sunday worship as soon as possible

Return church office to operational as soon as possible

## Task #1: Form a Collaborative Team, Clarify Purpose, Vision, Parameters And Set Goals (cont.)

As you move through the process, you might, but do not have to, note objectives under each goal. Objectives are smaller, measurable steps which help to achieve the larger goal.

*For example:*

*Goal:*

- *Protect the congregation's assets*

*Objectives:*

- *Establish and communicate plans for evacuation as well as sheltering in place*
- *Make sure facilities are safe and in good repair*
- *Maintain updated inventory of physical assets as well as adequate insurance coverage*

Don't get too detailed at this point. Your objectives will also be informed by what you discover as you gather other material needed to write the plan. Later in the process, you will return and refine your goals and objectives.

Even in TASK #1, frequently and regularly keep leaders of the congregation informed about the progress of the team and its planning. Ask for input and advice. People are more likely to champion and participate in the plan if they have been aware of the various pieces, understand why they are important and have had the opportunity to share their perspective and wisdom along the way.

*For instance:*

- *Place notes about the team's progress in the church newsletter*
- *Introduce and even try out a piece of the plan such as evacuation of Sunday school, fire drill or a lock down*
- *Review draft goals and objectives with the congregation council for input*

*EXAMPLE FROM HOLY TRINITY  
Created, loved and blessed by God and called to be a blessing to others, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church seeks to protect human wellbeing and physical resources from harm and to work cooperatively to bring healing and hope in times of disaster within our community and beyond. To do so we have established the following goals:*

- *Protect our congregation's assets (human and otherwise)*
- *Resume our ministry as quickly and simply as possible*
- *Support impacted parishioners in their recovery*
- *Reach out to vulnerable neighbors near and far*

# Task #1

## DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

What are the possible benefits to your congregation from creating and maintaining a preparedness plan?

When has your congregation experienced a situation where having a comprehensive preparedness plan may have made things easier? *(example: someone collapsing at worship service, a snow storm cancelling worship service, natural disaster, crisis in the community)*

Who comes to mind as someone to be on a preparedness team for your congregation? Why? How will you approach them and connect the need for a preparedness plan with his or her unique gifts and experience?

What are possible goal statements for your congregation's preparedness plan? How are those goals shaped by the regular ministry of the congregation as may be stated in the congregation's vision or mission statement?

What are the best avenues for conversation and education in your community? How might you best educate and listen to the wisdom of the whole community about preparedness planning?

## Task #2: Designate Members for Response Team

See page 58 for this task worksheet.

Since a disaster can occur at any time, early in their work the preparedness team should begin to imagine a response team for when disaster strikes. This team includes individuals who will be key decision makers and implementers of the congregation's preparedness plan when there is an emergency or disaster.

Selection of the individuals to serve on the response team should be made with the input and approval of the leaders of the congregation such as congregation council and ministry staff. Some of these roles may be assigned by position as opposed to an individual person. For instance, the chief decision maker may be designated as the pastor. Inquiry should then be made as to whether each nominee is willing to serve. Some members of the preparedness team may also serve on the response team.

While the response team should reflect the unique circumstances of the congregation, it should include the following roles:

### CHIEF DECISION MAKER

Since, in times of crisis, some decisions may need to be made when there is no time to convene a committee meeting, it is important to have a designated chief decision maker. This person will attempt, whenever possible, to keep the backup decision maker well-informed and include him or her in the process,

involve others in making the decisions, and keep as many as need to know in the loop.

### BACKUP DECISION MAKER

This person functions when the chief decision maker is not available or when asked by the chief decision maker to do so. This person stays informed of what the chief decision maker is dealing with.

### PARISH LEGAL COUNSEL

This person may or may not be a member of the congregation. Duties may involve overseeing and identifying the legal issues surrounding human resources, governance, property and more.

"A Ready Hope: Effective Disaster Ministries for Congregations," by Kathryn Haeisen and Carol Flores (Alban Institute, 2009) illustrates a number of situations where a congregation should consult its legal counsel and insurance agent before engaging in ministries in response to a disaster: the congregation considers setting up a drop-in day care center, a feeding program, opening a shelter for survivors of disaster or setting up housing for volunteers. While a congregation may already operate a preschool or host potluck suppers, etc., different liabilities may need to be addressed when adapting programs. Local standards for opening a shelter may come into play.

As you brainstorm possible ministries, check on legal implications and liability issues. These do not have to become roadblocks, but do need to be addressed so that the ministry can accomplish its goals. Some of these conversations can take place as part of preparedness

planning, as in, "What will we need to know and do before setting up the particular ministries we think we could provide?"

### SPOKESPERSON TO THE MEDIA

This person is the chief spokesperson for communicating accurate, timely information to the media, which helps to both tell and control the story. In time of crisis, the media may be the only way to communicate to others, especially those outside the crisis zone. This role might also be assigned to the chief or assistant decision maker.

### INSURANCE LIAISON

This person interacts with the insurance carrier.

Other roles on the team may include, but not be limited to a designated person:

- Assemble and restock first aid and other essential supplies
- Turn off the utilities and secure the property of the church, as necessary
- Oversee communication within the congregation

This response team may also maintain and update a list of other people whose knowledge and experience can be of assistance in times of need, such as: medical practitioners, emergency personnel, those who know CPR, have first aid training, can assist in restoration of business operations, etc.

The response team should designate a **crisis control center** (the place the response team will meet if a disaster threatens or occurs) as well as a secondary location.

## Task #2

*At a congregation near Philadelphia, the church sexton died suddenly. Unfortunately, he was the only one who knew the codes for the security system and the procedure for turning on the decades-old boiler. He died in the fall, just as the weather turned cold. A wedding was scheduled in the days after his sudden death. The wedding happened without much-needed heat because the congregation could not find a technician who understood the old boiler in time to warm the sanctuary for the assembly. How many people know the security codes and utility procedures in your congregation? How can they be obtained in an emergency situation?*

### DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

Imagine a natural disaster strikes the area of the church building. Who are the people within the congregation who will most likely respond to the needs of the church building? How will they know to check on the building? How will they know what to do?

Who has access and knowledge of the essential workings of the church buildings: security codes, how to manage the utilities, combination to the safe, access to change the website or voicemail? What if something happened to that person or people? How would church building functions return most quickly?

# Task #3: Conduct a Disaster Risk Assessment

See page 60 for this task worksheet.

In order to make a plan that will fit the congregation, the preparedness team needs to identify the types of crises and disasters to which it is most vulnerable.

Begin by engaging in “what if” thinking and a discussion to identify vulnerabilities. Include recent and potential local threats, hazards, disasters and crises as well as situations in the news. This list can be expanded by consulting a list of local or state risk assessments.

**Write down the risks, no matter how remote.**

Next, assess the risks you have identified by:

**Probability** – or frequency of occurrence

**Magnitude** – extent and severity of expected damage

**Warning** – likely time available to warn occupants

**Duration** – probable duration of threat or hazard

### Follow-up effects

Discuss the particular vulnerabilities of and threats to the particular ministries and the property of the congregation. This is only a beginning and will be expanded later.

HAZARD: TORNADO				
Probability	Magnitude	Warning	Duration	Risk Priority
Highly likely	Catastrophic	Minimal	12+ hours	High
Likely	Critical	6-12 hours	6-12 hours	Medium
Possible	Limited	12-24 hours	3-6 hours	Low
Unlikely	Negligible	>24 hours	>3 hours	NO risk

Example: A tornado may be possible, of critical magnitude, minimal warning and a short duration. This would result in Medium level of risk.

Examples:

#### TORNADO

- Unlikely, but they do occur in our area
- Very little warning
- Major threat is to building and its occupants
- How would we be warned? What are our steps to protect people?
- Are there things to be done inside and outside the building to minimize damage?

#### HURRICANE

- Likely, but usually more than 24-hour warning
- How do we monitor the approach of the storm?
- Are our facilities, particularly the roof, walls and windows well maintained?
- Does our building tend to take on water during heavy storms?

Finally, establish a risk priority of low, medium, high. As a result of this task, the team will have a prioritized list of threats and hazards which will inform the formation of a preparedness and response plan.

The chart above offers a visual way of estimating risk. It is not a mathematical formula. However, it becomes clear when you shade in the values for each hazard; a general level of risk emerges.

## Task #3

### **DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

What natural disasters have struck your area in recent years? How have local congregations been affected? (If you do not know, try doing an Internet search with the words “church” and “fire” or other disaster for news reports.)

What human-caused disasters happened in or near congregations? (e.g., shooting during worship, school lock-down nearby, a significant fire in the community, etc.)

Without a preparedness plan in place, how would your congregation respond to a disaster in the community? What would be the impacts of these types of events to various programs?

# Task #4: Inventory of the Assets of the Congregation

## GATHER PIECES NEEDED FOR THE PLAN

Tasks #4–12 constitute the most flexible portion of a congregation's preparedness plan. Some of these pieces are necessary in your particular plan. Some might not be necessary or appropriate. The team will need to assess the worthiness of each piece to your particular situation and include those pieces that are most appropriate for your community into the plan.

The preparedness plan should also specify where the original and copies of each major piece are located because different pieces may be stored at various locations. For instance, the inventory of ministries may be put in the appendix of the plan on the shelf in the church office. The list of current members, financial or physical assets may be kept in the church office with enough copies provided offsite for those who would need to know in case of emergency. While a recommendation for the location of each piece is noted, it is up to you to decide on their placement.

See page 61 for this task worksheet.

## TASK #4: AN INVENTORY OF ASSETS

After collecting the inventory of congregational assets, make sure that in addition to electronic copies you also have hard copies and that some are kept offsite in multiple secure locations. The electricity may go out for a long time and one of the offsite locations may not be accessible.

### HUMAN ASSETS

- All members and contact information*  
Note in the directory or prepare a sub list of those who are particularly vulnerable and relevant notes about specific needs and contact information for those who need to know or are responsible for this person's welfare. For example: the elderly, physically or mentally challenged people, people who are isolated or have limited resources, etc.
- Staff and contact information*
- Parishioners with disaster related skill/certifications and other resources*  
These folks can be useful in times of disaster. For example, first responders, those who speak the languages of surrounding population, Stephen Ministers, social workers, counselors, people who can provide child-care. Identify who has completed background checks and abuse clearances according to your congregation's policy.
- Outside groups which use the building with contact information*

- Partners in the community with contact information*  
For example, other communities of faith, schools, businesses, organizations, synod, local government contacts, etc.

### PHYSICAL ASSETS

- Make and regularly update a list of all physical property including church records and data systems. In addition to making a physical list of these assets, take pictures or make a video. As you do this, make note of any repairs needed or issues to be addressed.
- Consider whether any of these material assets should be archived, and, if so, do so.
- From the above list identify equipment and other physical resources important to disaster response such as vehicles, generator, kitchen, shower, large space for outdoor worship, etc.
- Make a list of items that should be removed if the building is threatened, where they should be taken and by whom.
- Make a list of items to be given special protection if the building is threatened, what steps are to be taken and by whom. (Example: computer should be wrapped in plastic and lifted off the floor.)
- If there are special codes or passwords needed to operate any physical assets, make a list of those or indicate how to access these.

## Task #4: Inventory of the Assets of the Congregation (cont.)

### PHYSICAL ASSETS (cont.)

7. Locate or produce a blueprint or drawing of the church facility. Mark the location of first aid and survival kits, fire extinguishers, utility cut-offs, building exits, alarm controls, fire-safe storage, and “safe spots” (example: windowless interior hallways or areas of reinforced structure where people may shelter).

### FINANCIAL ASSETS

1. What accounts, investments, lines of credit and loans do you have?
  - a. Where are they located?
  - b. What is the contact information?
  - c. Who can access them?
2. Where are the financial records and how are they backed up?
3. What steps does the congregation take to insure that the funds are protected from mismanagement?
4. What steps are necessary for the congregation to gather and distribute disaster-related donations of funds or supplies?

### MINISTRIES ARE ASSETS TO THE COMMUNITY

Identify your many ministries, including groups within the congregation, groups that use the building regularly and activities that take place within the facilities or under the auspices of the congregation. (e.g., worship, Christian education, quilters, prayer group, food bank, AA meetings, home repair ministry)

Identify any certifications the congregation may have, such as those for being a Red Cross Shelter.

*Two ministries at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale, Pa., have led the congregation to offer to serve the community as a hospitality center in times of disaster. On Wednesday nights, the congregation serves a community meal called “Feast” that is open to anyone in the community. The congregation also serves as a “Code Blue” shelter for homeless on the coldest nights of the year. It seemed a natural extension for Trinity to partner with the town for being the designated community hospitality center during significant weather or events. Trinity was proud to open its doors to the community when Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012 as well as for other more localized events over the past five years.*

## Task #4

### REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

God gifts the church and your congregation with what it needs to fulfill the ministry to which God calls. When you consider these gifts as assets, what surprises you? What challenges you?

How is the congregation best using the assets God has entrusted them? What are some areas of growth?

In what new ways can you imagine using these assets to respond to the community when disaster strikes?

What are your most essential ministries and programs to continue, even in the face of disaster (e.g., worship, Alcoholics Anonymous, weekly community supper)?

How might these most critical ministries and programs continue if your church building is compromised during disaster?

# Task #5: Assessing the Vulnerabilities of the Congregation

See page 66 for this task worksheet.

## AN ASSESSMENT OF VULNERABILITIES

Creating a preparedness plan prompts the congregation to look discerningly to the vulnerabilities inherent in congregational property and functioning. Some vulnerability can be mitigated with intentional upkeep and attention.

**Vulnerability:** open to attack or damage, weaknesses, susceptibilities

## PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

How do you ensure that property is kept in good repair?

Who is responsible for making sure that regular maintenance and upkeep happens?

What is the process for identifying needed maintenance, approving expenditures and executing repairs?

When does the congregation's process work best? When does the process break down?

## VULNERABILITIES

What physical vulnerabilities exist in the congregation's physical plant? (e.g., it's located in low lying area, near industrial-use railroad tracks or highways, streets regularly flood, basement takes in water, roof is 25 years old.)

What measures are in place to:

Prevent accidents?

Mitigate liability?

## INSURANCE

Identify insurance coverage levels for:

- Injuries and accidents
- Misconduct or abuse
- Fiscal mismanagement
- Damage to property

What inadequacies or vulnerabilities need to be addressed even if you cannot address them immediately?

## Task #5

### REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Discussions of vulnerabilities and liabilities can become overwhelming. How does your congregation balance a reasoned approach to issues of liability and risk while being faithful to God's call to ministry?

As you consider the vulnerabilities which are inherent in congregational life (the church building, regular gatherings of large crowds of people, shared leadership), how do you make decisions about which vulnerabilities are more critical than others? How do you prioritize the work of addressing vulnerabilities?

How can you use the congregation's assets to shore up vulnerabilities?

## Task #6: Identify Partners, Agreements And Resources

See page 67 for this task worksheet.

### PARTNERS, AGREEMENTS AND RESOURCES FOR TIME OF NEED

When disaster threatens or strikes there is an immediate need for action. The more relationships that are forged and information that is gathered ahead of time, the more efficiently a community can prevent or minimize damage and suffering and bring order out of chaos.

The lists of partners, agreements, resources for and steps to be taken in times of need that are put together for the preparedness plan help create the building blocks necessary for leadership. When relationships are established, the pathways of “working together” are clearer and community organizations, families and government can more easily lend each other a hand. This relationship building may be in the form of participating in a local ministerium or services consortium, of knocking on the door and giving a handshake, inviting the emergency manager to a council meeting, organizing a community festival with others, or any other activity whereby your congregational leadership gets to know others in the community.

*The Joplin Area Ministerial Alliance existed prior to the May 22, 2011, tornado in Joplin, Mo. After the tornado, the alliance quickly met and determined what churches could handle food and feeding, collection and distribution of donations, as well as accepting and housing volunteers. They were already using a communication software system called Charity Tracker ([www.charitytracker.com](http://www.charitytracker.com)), which made distribution of donations easier and helped eliminate duplication of benefits. This network included ministry members and was open to any organization reaching out to the Joplin area.*

### GOVERNMENT

Find out what programs the local, state and national governments can offer. Make a list of services and programs you might benefit from and whom to contact. Get to know key local contacts in the police department, fire department, emergency management office, etc.

*During a recent stretch of very cold temperatures, an apartment building in the suburbs of Philadelphia lost its heating system on Friday, late afternoon. Municipality staff knew of the presence of the large Lutheran congregation across the street from the building. Unfortunately, they did not have an existing relationship with the leadership. They called the church office but only got the answering system. It took several phone calls and emails to find someone who could contact congregational leaders to ask if the church could shelter anyone who could not find a friend or relative with whom to stay during the outage.*

### LOCAL PARTNERS

Identify other communities of faith and organizations with whom you might partner in times of crisis and disaster. Get to know their leaders and resources and brainstorm ways you can be of help to one another and the community. Consider drawing up at least simple statements of understanding about specific ways you could assist one another.

### SYNOD AND NATIONAL CHURCH

Find out how your synod, Lutheran Disaster Response and the ELCA respond if you or your area experience a crisis or disaster, and whom to contact when. Request a copy of the synod's disaster plan, if one exists.

Find your local Lutheran Disaster Response affiliated social ministry organization at <http://www.ELCA.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Social-Ministry-Organizations>. Make contact with them and establish a relationship.

**Example: If one community of faith or organization cannot use its facilities, the other could offer space for worship, business operations, etc.** A school might be allowed to use classrooms in your church. Your congregation might be allowed to worship in a local gym.

## Task #6

### REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

In disaster, communities are often surprised at the network of willing partners that arises to help in recovery. How is this network strengthened by developing relationships before disaster strikes?

How well is your congregation connected to the community in which you are situated? What contacts do you already have in the school district, local government, other congregations, non-profit organizations, etc.?

How can you strengthen the congregation's presence and shape its identity in the community?

## Task #7: Decision-Making Process

See page 69 for this task worksheet.

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS FOR CONTINUING AND ADJUSTING CURRENT MINISTRIES AND RESPONDING TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES

While no one can predict what will be needed for a specific disaster, often current ministries and administrative activities need to be adjusted and new opportunities for ministry may arise. Having a discussion about and then including a description of how decisions would be made in the preparedness plan can assist the congregation to adjust more smoothly. When a discussion about potential opportunities for ministry is held prior to a disaster, the congregation may be better able to quickly evaluate and respond to those that present themselves.

Whenever possible, the leadership team should include others in the discussion of these priorities both before and when there is a need to adjust some ministries and activities. When it comes to implementing the decision-making process in time of disaster, a simple statement of the reason for a particular decision, who made it and the circumstances under which and/or the anticipated time the ministry or activity is likely to resume, may assist those impacted to accept and cooperate with the decision.

Decisions will also be needed on when and how to scale back and end various responses to the disaster. Consider how these decisions will be made.

If the crisis or disaster is expected to have enduring effects, the leadership team will also need to assemble those who need to discuss how to address these. For example, if many parishioners have left the area, are out of work, and/or have sustained significant damages to their homes, consideration needs to occur of how that will affect the finances of the congregation and what steps need to be taken to cope with the situation. Once again, having discussions before a disaster about possible effects of such an event will increase the ability of the congregation to survive and recover.

Referring to the potential disasters you have identified, brainstorm what ministries might need to be adjusted and which services might be needed to assist individuals and the community in the relief and recovery stages. Consider inviting the leaders of different ministry areas into the discussion. Decide how the decisions would be made and communicated. Be sure to review the plan with leaders of current ministries.

You may wish to add information, current capacity or goals for setting up work and other mission teams, including those which go outside the immediate vicinity.

**NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY**  
New opportunities for ministry may surface, such as requests from outside agencies, obvious needs of neighbors,

awareness of members of the congregation, etc. In a large scale disaster no one congregation can or should try to provide all the services needed.

A congregation can find it exciting and renewing to begin to identify which opportunities might fit best with the resources and mission of the congregation as well as what would be needed to make the decision and to put these into action as well as to scale them back.

- What kind of approval would be needed?
- Are there any certifications required?
- What safeguards would need to be put into place?

For example, if you decide to offer extended childcare, discuss where you would do it, who might staff it, how you would decide which children were eligible, where you would get the supplies, etc. Make notes from the discussions about adjusting ministries and responding to opportunities so that they can be referred to when a disaster strikes.

Examples of potential opportunities:

- Provide a resting place for first responders
- Serve as a warming station for community members
- Housing for volunteers
- Host a community worship service

There are many opportunities for congregations to take leadership in long-term recovery. This will be explored in more detail in Part Two: Response.

## Task #7

*On Friday, Sept. 22, 2010, the small town (230 residents) of Hammond, Minn., was flooded. There had been 10 inches of rain in the preceding 24 hours and a dam on the river broke 15 miles upriver from Hammond.*

*Of the 100 structures in Hammond, 75 percent were damaged, about one-third of the 81 homes were destroyed. Some people barely escaped with their lives. St. John Lutheran Church was heavily damaged by four feet of water outside and two feet of water inside their building. However, the structure remained sound. In fact, the fellowship hall was deemed the best preserved structure in the flood plain.*

*The pastor from nearby Rushford who had shepherded his congregation in their response to local flooding in 2007, offered his congregation's resources to assist the Hammond church with planning its response. Within eight days, the inside of the church was clean. The mayor and other disaster officials asked the church if they could use the fellowship hall for the disaster recovery center since the weather had turned too cold for them to continue to use the tent which they had set up on higher ground. The congregation agreed and temporarily held church services with its sister congregation, Immanuel, in Pottsdam.*

*Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota and other agencies moved into the fellowship hall. A satellite office was set up with a social worker who served as case manager as well as people who coordinated disaster recovery efforts, including volunteer and materials management. In addition, washers and dryers were brought into the building and a food pantry was set up; for the first two months, meals were served every Saturday for volunteers as well as residents. Ten months after the flood the congregation returned to worship.*

### DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

Imagine that your community was severely impacted by a natural disaster but the church building remains intact although without electricity. How might your church serve the community in its time of need? How might you use the assets that you have to respond to the great need in the community? What steps are necessary to make these imagined plans real?

How might your congregation be prepared to be a center for assistance when disaster strikes? What might you put in place before a disaster strikes? (e.g., purchase a generator, create storage for cots and blankets, maintain a supply of bottled water)

## Task #8: Create a Communication Plan

See page 70 for this task worksheet.

### HOW COMMUNICATIONS WILL OCCUR DURING EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS

Clear communication is critical during times of disaster, but it is often significantly more difficult than usual. Power and telephone lines may be down causing disruptions in phone and electronic communication. External communication to members of the congregation, the media and the general public is important. Equally important is internal communication between the response team members and others who may be participating in emergency or continuity of operations.

Develop a plan for how communications should flow to and from leadership and within the network of responders and the congregation during emergencies and times of disaster.

**Include but do not limit yourself to the following:**

1. **Stay alert to possible threat**  
Identify how the response team, those in charge of ministries and activities and those within the church facilities will stay alert to possible threats. For example, is there a weather alarm in the administrative office? If the county has

an automated phone notification system in case of emergency, are you on their list?

2. **Communication with leaders during emergency and disaster**

Identify how the response team, those in charge of ministries and activities and those within the church facilities will communicate in times of threat or actual disaster.

Identify how the response team will communicate with emergency management, other community partners and congregation members. Offer alternatives that take into account whether or not electrical power is available.

3. **Communication with members of the congregation**

Phone trees, electronic messaging, methods that don't rely on electricity or cell towers could include message boards at the front of the church, flyers posted at grocery stores or community bulletin boards.

Additional information about crisis communication internally and externally is included in the additional resources section.

*A simple thing like a telephone tree is important to include in a disaster plan. Recently, a Lutheran parish in Eastern New York State experienced some flooding in the community where they are located. The pastor of the congregation spent at least four hours calling each member of her congregation to ensure that they were OK. After all of those phone calls, it was realized that if there had been a telephone tree in place, the process may have gone more quickly.*

## Task #8

### REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Discuss your congregation's current communication plan. How does pertinent information get communicated? How does emergency information (e.g., cancellations) get communicated? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this plan?

How do most people in your community receive information? (e.g., newsletters, Internet, smartphone, etc.) To what means will they turn if there is no electricity or cellphone service?

How will you decide who has the authority to speak on behalf of the congregation when disaster strikes? What traits must this person possess? Who is the best candidate if the pastor, staff or congregational president is not available?

## Task #9: Emergency Operations

See Worksheet on page 71.

In times of emergency, those present will need to listen to the directives of the designated leader of the activity until someone with more authority arrives or communicates with the group. If emergency responders (fire, police, ambulance, etc.) arrive, directives of their leaders take precedence and are to be followed. Procedures created before the event can help mitigate the panic and chaos that is possible with these unforeseen events.

Imagine any number of scenarios where people are occupying the church building and an emergency occurs:

1. Someone collapses in the middle of worship
2. A fire in the boiler room
3. An unstable or violent person in the building
4. Quick moving tornado

Consider the best-case response of leadership, how instructions will be communicated and necessary information that can be shared with outside groups who use the building. For example, a scouting group that meets in the church building when no congregational leaders are present should be informed of what to do if the fire alarm

goes off, the address of the church for communication with emergency personnel and contact information for any other issues during the meeting time.

Basic emergency plans and instructions should be posted prominently near light switches or doorways so that anyone can access the information without wasting time searching for a leader or staff member.

MAKE PLANS FOR THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS:

***Evacuate:*** all occupants must leave a specific area.

When writing your directives, consider various levels of occupancy, such as weekdays, evenings, Sunday mornings, etc. Decide what steps are to be taken and a rendezvous location for groups. Provide signs for the evacuation routes and place in logical locations. Decide on how and when to practice these procedures.

***Lock Down:*** all occupants inside a facility must remain inside and prevent any unauthorized person from entering the building.

A lockdown may occur when a dangerous situation or person may be within or in the vicinity of the building (e.g., robbery has taken place in the neighborhood and the suspect is still at large.) Consider who needs to be trained in lock down procedures (e.g., office staff, Sunday school teachers, pre-school staff.)

***Shelter In Place:*** all occupants stay within a facility, perhaps for an extended period of time.

Those present in the facility may find it wise or be ordered to stay in the facility when an emergency or disaster occurs in the nearby vicinity and it is not safe to leave the building. For example, a storm may take down power lines or trees or cause a flash flood which makes the roads impossible to navigate safely.

## Task #9

*In July 2011, while vacation Bible school was in session at the Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, Emmaus, Pa., armed men robbed a nearby bank. One armed suspect escaped on foot into the area and was at large for several hours.*

*After two parents notified the church office, all the children were brought inside and the doors locked. Staff members were notified, but the children were not told. The senior pastor contacted the local law enforcement who initially wanted the church to keep the children until the suspect was caught. However, when the police were told that there was not enough time to notify parents before the normal dismissal time, the police came to coordinate dismissal. Meanwhile, the director of vacation Bible school made an alphabetical list of all students present.*

*At the time for dismissal, the children were kept in the sanctuary singing songs and doing other fun things. Parents were not allowed into the building. Instead, parents stayed in their vehicles, while the director checked parental ID and other staff brought children to the cars that had been cleared. Once in the vehicle, parents told their children the reason for the change in procedure. Pick up of the over 100 children took about 45 minutes.*

*Lesson learned: the police knew that the local high school was in session and notified the principal of the situation. However, the police did not know that the church had vacation Bible school going on and therefore did not notify the church.*

### REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Were you ever in a setting where you had to lock down, shelter in place or evacuate? Were you concerned about finding family and close friends as those policies were implemented? How were your fears relieved?

What would it look like on a Sunday morning if your congregation had to evacuate, lock down or shelter in place? What factors prepare the congregation to weather these emergency situations well? What supplies would be beneficial to have on hand?

# Task #10: Planning for Continuity of Ministry

*See page 72 for this task worksheet.*

Planning for the continuity of ministry includes the steps that must be taken to ensure critical functions and ministries can continue if a disaster of any scale causes enough damage that results in normal day-to-day administrative and ministry functions being compromised.

When a crisis or disaster threatens or occurs, the response team will determine whether it is possible or wise to maintain all current ministries and activities listed in the inventory of ministries (location of info). If the team determines that it is wise to limit some of these, it will determine which ones and communicate these decisions to those in charge of those ministries or activities.

Whenever possible, the response team will endeavor to include others in the discussion of these priorities both before and when there is need to curtail some ministries and activities. The team will also determine whether and how and which administrative activities to continue, such as those that occur in the church office. If the crisis or disaster is expected to have enduring effects, leadership will assemble those who need to discuss how to address these.

## RESPONSE FOR CHALLENGES TO CURRENT MINISTRIES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE

When disaster threatens or occurs, the disaster response leadership team will, in consultation with the congregation council, staff and other leaders of ministries consider new opportunities for temporary or long-term ministries. Such opportunities may surface as requests from outside agencies, obvious needs of neighbors, awareness of members of the congregation, etc.

## DECISION MAKING FOR SCALING BACK AND ENDING DISASTER RESPONSE

As people and the community recover from the disaster, decisions about how and when the congregation will cut back on its responses will be made by the response team in consultation with other congregational leaders, shared with those most directly concerned and then communicated to the congregation.

## Task #10

### REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Looking at the list of current ministries, which would you designate as essential if one of the disasters you listed as top priority were to occur? Which could be temporarily discontinued, scaled back or meet in another location? Which might you expand or initiate?

Do you remember a time you personally, or you as a congregation felt called to take on new and unexpected challenges? Was there any trouble maintaining already existing commitments?

How did you make decisions about where to commit resources and energy?

## Tasks #11–13

### Task #11: Obtain Approval of the Plan

Once the plan is prepared, it is important to obtain official congregational approval and then ownership of the plan. Usually this will be done through the congregation council. Acceptance of the plan may be more efficient if the preparedness team has kept leadership in the congregation involved and informed in the process of preparing the plan.

### Task #12: Communicate, Practice, Review and Adjust the Plan

Once the plan is approved, the preparedness team should plan to teach the community about the plan and encourage practice, review and make periodic adjustment.

It is important to practice the plan regularly since people may forget the steps, circumstances may change, new people may join and the leadership of outside organizations may change.

### Task #13: The Process Grows and Deepens Over Time

As the congregation lives out the preparedness plan, new insights will emerge, vulnerabilities and assets may change, relationships will grow in the surrounding community and the plan will necessarily change.

For example, as a congregation reviews its assets, it often becomes aware of how it could update, expand or strengthen them. It might review whether there is sufficient insurance coverage for its actual physical assets, put a battery operated weather radio in the office, expand partnerships with local emergency management or add information about common responses to the training of Stephen Ministers. Members of the preparedness team can work with others to identify and act on ways to increase the strength of the congregation to avert and respond to disasters.

## Tasks #11–13

### REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Do you remember the last time you applied for a job? A loan? A grant? Did you have to consider assets and weaknesses in order to think more clearly about what you could offer?

What insights came out of considering the tasks in this section that will help you talk to leadership about the importance of planning and about what your congregation has to offer the larger community?

What is the best way to get support of key decision makers in your congregation for the implementation of the plan?

# Part Two: Response

LONG-TERM RECOVERY

EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL CARE

WORSHIP IN TIMES OF DISASTER

## FROM RESPONSE TO RECOVERY

This section discusses how a community gets from responding to a disaster, to recovering from a disaster. This process is called long-term recovery and may last weeks to years. Referring back to the timeline of needs on page 43, the graphic indicates that long-term begins just shortly after the period when a community concludes the activities around emergency response. This long-term recovery phase is a period of sorting out remaining unmet needs, often paying particular attention to those of the most vulnerable in our communities. The goal is to “recover;” to return to a state of normal, though it may be a “new normal.”

For community-based disasters, such as a large scale apartment fire where a high percentage of renters do not have renters insurance, there may be needs for temporary housing and replacement of clothing and furniture. Unmet needs may go beyond what early response groups like local emergency management, American Red Cross and the Salvation Army would provide. It takes organizing on the part of local

congregations and other community groups to raise money, decide how to disperse funds, tabulate specific needs of survivors and manage material donations.

In the case of a larger scale disaster, a long-term recovery group is usually established by the community, often with outside assistance, in order to help its most vulnerable

residents through the recovery process. Some of the same roles and leaders described in the example of the large apartment fire would be filled by local organizations, but it is also likely that many outside groups including Lutheran Disaster Response, United Methodist Committee on Relief, Church World Service, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency would offer assistance to community leadership in establishing a long-term recovery program.

Long-term recovery groups determine and prioritize unmet needs. These needs may include housing, clothing, food, home repair, spiritual and emotional care and financial support. Sorting out these needs requires a holistic, integrated process of needs assessment, case management, fundraising and volunteer coordination. Long-term recovery also includes significant interaction with local governments because of issues related to building codes, permits and discussions about how to implement community strategies to prevent similar disasters in the future. The ultimate goal of the long-term recovery phase is to help people return to the balance of a new normal.

While groups outside the local community like the Federal Emergency Management Agency and larger disaster response organizations may provide expertise on how to develop a long-term recovery group, it is local leadership on the part of community organizations like churches, local food pantries, the local United Way and others that is critical to the success of a long-term recovery program. In addition to providing leadership to the long-term recovery group, there are several ways a congregation and volunteers can be involved in this phase. In fact, it is at this phase when volunteers are most needed. Some ways that a congregation can support long-term recovery include: recruiting volunteers, serving as the fiscal agent, providing meeting space or helping to manage donations.

No matter what the scope of the disaster or the recovery, congregations participating in a long-term recovery group should consider these important factors.

- How group decisions will be made
- Client confidentiality
- Volunteer safety and liability
- The possible existence of state or local voluntary organizations active in disaster
- Relationships with local and state emergency management

- Defining scope of work on properties that will be repaired
- How funds will be distributed

Consideration of these factors may result in the development of protocols like long-term recovery group bylaws, volunteer policies, homeowner agreements, etc. If a voluntary organization active in disaster is active in the area, leadership from that group may be able to provide valuable resources to the long-term recovery group.

If the disaster occurs well outside the boundaries of the congregation's local community, a congregation can coordinate volunteer work team trips to travel to the affected region. It is a long-standing Lutheran tradition to travel to other parts of the country to do this type of work. When volunteer teams do this, they are actively participating in this long-term recovery process! Congregations and volunteers interested in doing this type of work can contact Lutheran Disaster Response by visiting [www.ELCA.org/disaster](http://www.ELCA.org/disaster) to learn about available work team opportunities.

Developed and run by Lutheran Social Service, Minnesota, "Camp Noah" is a program unique to the Lutheran Disaster Response network and is another way that volunteers can participate in long-term recovery. Camps are held in areas impacted by disaster providing grade-school aged children the opportunity and resources to bond, play and heal. Congregations can provide volunteers, offer space or financially support Camp Noah programs across the nation.

To learn more about long-term recovery, and to download a copy of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster long-term recovery manual, visit [www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org). To learn more about Camp Noah visit [www.campnoah.org](http://www.campnoah.org).

***See a List of Links and Resources on page 101.***

## EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL CARE IN TIMES OF DISASTER<sup>2</sup>

Previous sections of this guidebook described many practical steps that leaders and congregation members can take to protect lives and property, and to serve their neighbors in very tangible ways in time of disaster. Certainly disaster can cause the foundations of buildings to shake and can cause dramatic disruptions to power, economic and governmental systems. Disaster can also shake and disrupt very important core beliefs people have about God, faith and religion. This section is designed to help spiritual leaders in congregations continue to minister, accompany, witness and support those affected by disaster.

### INTRODUCTION

Within the questions below lies the critical ministry of the church in the trying times of disaster.

When disaster strikes, people ask:

*“Where is God in all of this?”*

*“Why did God let this happen?”*

*“How could God do this to me?”*

If the event was caused or exacerbated by human neglect, mistake or deliberate action, it holds additional meaning in our hearts and minds and people ask:

*“Why would someone do this?”*

*“How could someone let this happen?”*

These and other questions hold deep spiritual implications and are connected to powerful feelings of mourning, anger, revenge and depression. No matter the cause, questions, cries and lamentations are raised continually:

*“Where is God?”*

*“Where is God’s grace?”*

*“Why didn’t God protect us?”*

In a letter commemorating the second anniversary of the tragedies of 9/11, the Rev. Stephen Bouman, former bishop of Metropolitan New York Synod, wrote, “The cross is God’s way of saying clearly to all creation: “In life and death, in the tragedy, passion and renewal of all existence, God is present all the way.” And so, too, as the church, we are present and active.

Since a congregation plays a strong role within the community, its leadership needs to be present and accessible in times of disaster. Church doors need to be opened and remain open. Rostered and other leaders need to be out on the street and

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<sup>2</sup> Much of the content of this section is based on “Prepared to Care: by Gil Furst.

in the community, visible, accessible and bearing symbols that identify them with the church. Doing so illustrates that, just as the church was with the community before the tragedy, the church will be with it now.

Lutheran Disaster Response works through social ministry organizations and synods to organize the Lutheran response and coordinate with partners in disaster recovery work including government, emergency management and other faith-based and voluntary organizations. Since congregations are the most local expression of the work of Lutheran Disaster Response, they are an integral part. They report what is needed in their area, become locations of care and provide resources.

This chapter provides some guidelines on the how the church and congregation can be God's loving presence in disaster relief and recovery. While some among your leaders may be qualified to serve as social workers or psychologists, construction workers or case managers, it is important that rostered leaders continue to exercise their primary call and role as spiritual leaders. It is also vital that all who provide services be attentive to self-care and respite so they do not burn out. Recovery is not a short-lived sprint but a grueling marathon. Let your faith, compassion and professional training guide you.

Showing genuine care and concern is part of our everyday call as the baptized people of God. This chapter will build on the skills your church staff, leaders and members already possess by providing information on the unique emotional needs of victims, survivors and people impacted by disaster in the first hours, days, weeks and months after a disaster.

*Late on the night of Feb. 9, 2011, a gas explosion leveled a city block and killed five residents of Allentown, including an infant. The next evening nearby St. Stephen's Lutheran Church opened its doors to people who wanted to gather in the sanctuary for information, conversation and prayer. This was announced through public media. The 40 or so people who attended included two from the local television station who, with permission, discretely filmed the event and, later that evening, began its news coverage with images of people gathered for discussion and then holding hands around the Christ candle and baptismal font while speaking the 23rd Psalm, and praying together. As a result the entire Lehigh Valley had a chance to glimpse light that shatters the darkness. The next week the city of Allentown held its community memorial service in St. Stephens' sanctuary, followed by a time for mutual comfort and conversation in the fellowship hall.*

#### BEING WITH SURVIVORS OF A DISASTER

Disasters cause the loss of life, loved ones and valued possessions. When people have been traumatized, they need the support of someone who genuinely cares and is concerned about them. It is not necessary to have a degree or clinical training in mental health services to help these individuals.

When a disaster occurs, survivors will have many questions. The faithful can help survivors by giving witness to God's love and providing support without judgment. We are called to be with people in their suffering and confusion, to comfort and encourage them. Remember, it is not necessary to have all the answers, but it is important to accompany people as they try to make sense of what is going on.

#### *What can you do?*

- Listen
- Give witness to God's love
- Welcome without judgment
- Be sensitive to needs and concerns
- Be careful not to force your beliefs on them



You are called to be with people; to comfort and encourage them in their suffering and chaos. Your actions and compassionate involvement with the congregation and community members is critical. Your response will help shape your ministry and their recovery in the weeks, months and years to come.

As you care for others, be sure to take time to take care of yourself. You, too, are loved by God. As you care for yourself and your family you will also be better able to continue to help others. If you feel overly stressed or fatigued, contact your local synod office or Lutheran Disaster Response coordinator for additional guidance or support.

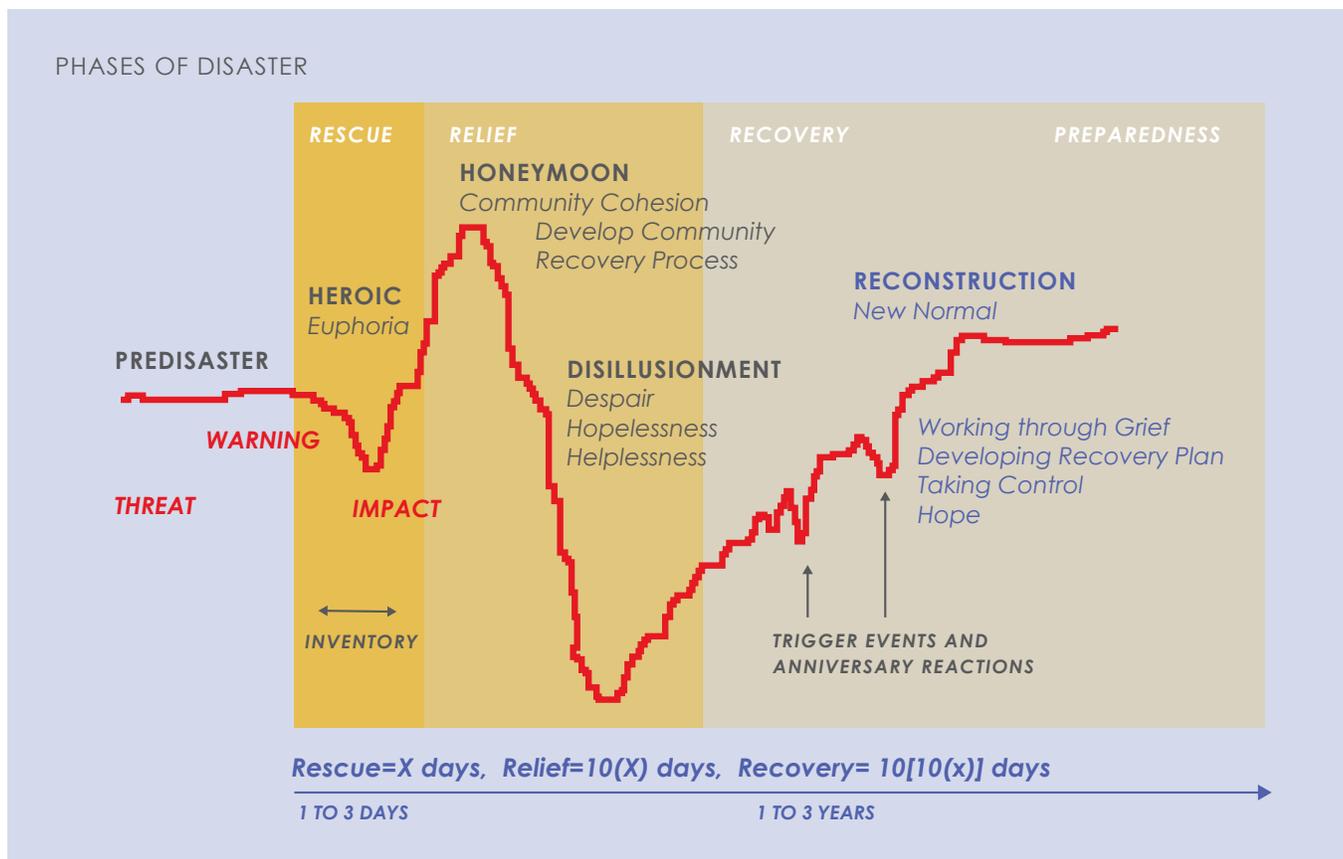
*In February 2009, a plane crash occurred in the small community of Clarence Center New York. Zion Lutheran Church is located within a quarter of a mile of the crash site. The members of Zion opened their doors, offered food and drink, and spiritually nourished the first responders for a period of two weeks. With the assistance of other Lutheran congregations in the greater Buffalo, N.Y., area, the emotional and spiritual care operation was kept operational around the clock for that two-week period.*

*For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you (Isaiah 54:10).*

**STAGES OF DISASTER—A ROLLER COASTER OF EMOTIONS**  
 Keeping in mind the stages of disaster, timeline of needs and emotional phases of disaster recovery that were explained in the introductory section of this guidebook, let us explore in more depth what is often called the emotional roller coaster of disaster.

While the emotional reactions of individuals and communities are unique, they also tend to follow a predictable pattern. At a given moment, however, not everyone will be at the same position on the roller coaster.

As time passes, people become emotionally and physically tired. Snags in recovery develop. Weaknesses in the systems



become apparent. All these lead to a fairly rapid and steep drop into disillusionment, despair, hopelessness and helplessness. However, effective outside assistance that not only brings resources and additional manpower, but also respects and encourages survivors and their community to make informed decisions and to do what they can for themselves can help bring hope as the community recovery processes are developed. Gradually, people work through the grief, develop effective recovery plans, take more control of their own lives and eventually reach a “new normal.”

“VICTIM,” “SURVIVOR,” “PERSON IMPACTED BY DISASTER” OR “THRIVER”

Language is a tool for identity. In the aftermath of disaster, the way one uses language can be a means to process the trauma of the event.

When people experience trauma or a disaster, they feel vulnerable. Healing comes from the ability of people to reclaim their lives, including their abilities to self-determine and make decisions. The use of language is a major contributing factor in healing.

When speaking with people affected by a disaster, you will notice a variety of ways people refer to themselves as they tell their stories. Some call themselves “victims” because that is how they think of themselves at the moment and they want others to know of their pain, suffering and ongoing struggle. Others quickly state that they are “survivors” because they have endured a crisis and are moving to recover their lives. In other cases, individuals initially state that they are “victims,” and, as they move through the recovery process, they call themselves “survivors” or even “thrivers.” While it is important to empathize with those who have been impacted by disaster, those active in disaster response tend to encourage use of the term “survivors” in order to promote healing and recovery.

*Prior to the flooding of 2011 in Athens, Pa., Roxanne had been an active volunteer in many organizations. After the flood she wouldn't even go back to look at the house and became withdrawn. Jerry, the local volunteer project coordinator, gently took her by the hand, walked her through the house and said, “We can fix this.” One week after her case was opened; Roxanne wanted to volunteer for long-term recovery coalition. Not only did Roxanne become a faithful volunteer holding a responsible position, she started to smile again and cheerfully helped other survivors as well as volunteers. Roxanne's house was completed in 2012.*

A disaster can traumatize people to different degrees and in a variety of ways, depending on their experiences. Those offering support will seek to discern whether:

- Experience happened directly to the individual, such as having one's home destroyed
- Individual has been directly involved in recovery work, such as a first responder evacuating a family from their home, who might therefore experience a secondary trauma
- Lives in a neighboring community not impacted by the disaster and therefore feels a mix of emotions which might include relief as well as survivor's guilt
- Person repeatedly watched the event unfold on television
- Person is relating the event to a previous trauma which he or she personally experienced

It is also critical to understand that the impact of a disaster may be broad, deep, and often hidden. Language gives us clues and insights into the stories being told. The words people use can be an indication of how they see themselves and how they want to be treated or referred to. Be sensitive to their vulnerability and listen carefully to how their stories evolve and how they define themselves.

#### CRISIS INTERVENTION

Crisis intervention is done immediately after a crisis has occurred. It is not the same as grief counseling or psychotherapy.

***Crisis Intervention: The process of providing immediate relief from the psychological pain of the tragedy or disaster so that the survivor can function well enough to get through the immediate aftermath.***

It helps survivors take in what has occurred, understand their own reactions, decide what to do next, and begin to normalize their lives. Crisis intervention is done to help people regain a sense of normalcy and to return to or even improve their previous level of functioning.

You can help individuals by being a non-anxious presence to whom they can tell their stories and express what they are feeling. In addition, you can get training in what is called “psychological first aid” from a variety of organizations, including the American Red Cross. Be aware during crisis intervention that you are involved in doing emotional triage and that some people may need to be referred to mental health professionals.

Common reactions of individuals involved in a crisis include:

- **Immobilization:** numbness, inability to think or react.
- **Denial:** not being able to accept the reality of the crisis. Thinking, for example, that “It’s not happening.” “It’s a dream.” “I’ll wake up soon.”
- **Anger or anxiety,** which often masks vulnerability and fear.
- **A spike in adrenalin and a “can do” attitude.** These may dissipate as fatigue and the extent of the reality register.
- **Self-Doubt:** questioning of oneself. For example, “Did I really do all I could have to prevent or stop the disaster?”
- **Depression:** dejection that occurs after a trauma. The highest risk for suicide is when people start coming out of depression and have the energy and strength to make a suicide plan and carry it out. Even as a person’s emotions start to lift there may be slumps as obstacles, challenges or anniversaries are encountered.
- **Testing:** trying out new behaviors and feeling better about oneself and life.
- **Acceptance** of the fact that a terrible experience has occurred, but they have learned from it and are stronger and, perhaps, even better for it.

These reactions to crisis or grief do not necessarily happen in any set order, nor does every individual experience all of them. People may also find themselves fluctuating between reactions: at one moment accepting that something bad has happened and they will get through it, at another feeling very angry or depressed.

**Remember: most people rebound by natural support.** However, if the reaction significantly interferes with normal functioning, a referral to mental health counseling may be appropriate, especially in the case of depression.

## LOSS

Loss comes with every tragedy or disaster. There may be loss of property or lives. Familiar landmarks or routines may be greatly altered. Friends may move away. Life as people once knew it has changed, sometimes very dramatically. The impact on the emotional and spiritual well-being of survivors can be enormous.

At some point, survivors may need help with the grief that comes with their losses. They will need support and understanding as they try to find ways to deal with the aftermath

of the crisis and work to establish a new sense of what is normal. Since their secure world has been shattered, they will need help dealing with that loss of security.

Grief counseling is done after the immediate aftermath of a crisis has lessened and the survivors are feeling the pain and hurt of the losses they have experienced because of the crisis. Grief counseling seeks to help survivors experience the pain and come to terms with their losses.

Some identify the stages of grief as:

- **Denial:** survivors who maintain there really is nothing wrong and that they are perfectly fine may be experiencing the denial stage of grief.
- **Anger:** strong feelings of anger are frequently encountered. They may be generalized against anyone, though especially against a perpetrator if one is suspected, or they may be specifically directed at a relief agency, the government, or people helping in recovery. The anger may be with God or the unfairness of the situation.
- **Depression** is both a common and expected reaction to loss and it can also be a serious symptom of grief. You need to make referrals to mental health professionals if the depression significantly interferes with a person’s daily living and recovery.
- **Bargaining:** thinking “I’ll ... (be good, make amends, etc.) if you just make this awful thing go away.”
- **Acceptance:** an attitude that frankly acknowledges the extent of the loss, accepts the limitations that have been imposed, and looks toward whatever recovery is possible.

Remember: survivors may experience aspects of all these stages, though not necessarily in any order. Sometimes they will fluctuate rapidly or cycle back through two or more.

The psalms and the book of Job give voice to anger in the face of grief and may provide comfort at this stage.

*How Long, O LORD?  
Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
How long must I bear pain in my soul,  
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?  
Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!  
(Psalm 13:1-3a)*

### THREE PHASES OF RESPONSE

When a disaster occurs, it affects individuals in many ways. In most cases people who have been impacted by the disaster will go through three emotional phases following a disaster: impact, immediate response, and recovery.

**IMPACT PHASE:** Fear and disbelief

**IMMEDIATE RESPONSE PHASE/RECOIL:** Immediate reactions and the beginning of trying to regain control.

**RECOVERY PHASES:** Ups and downs as survivors begin to make sense of the crisis and find a new sense of what is “normal.” Hopefully these reactions will lead to an acceptance of what happened and moving forward into the future using the knowledge and coping skills learned from the crisis.

*The following pages offer guidance for your self-care and leadership during each phase.*

### IMPACT PHASE

#### CARE FOR SELF:

During the time of the disaster, your first priority is the safety and security of yourself and your loved ones. Throughout this entire event and recovery, you will need encouragement, support and downtime or you will become exhausted, lose confidence and burn out. You cannot take care of others unless you take care of yourself.

- Assess your family and loved ones’ needs.
- Pray, read your Bible, and continue to do your devotions.
- Help reduce your body stress: eat nutritiously, rest and exercise.

#### CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY AS A SPIRITUAL LEADER:

Once you and your family are safe, consider the needs of others in your community and congregation. Depending on the size and structure of your congregation, you may enlist others to help to perform some of these tasks:

- **Follow directives of emergency management.** If you are told to stay off the streets, do so.
- **Assess the situation** and needs of your neighbors, members of the congregation and the community. As you are able, use other congregational leaders and members to assist in this effort. However, avoid clogging phone lines that may be needed to get vital assistance to victims.

- **Contact or arrange for contact with the following:**

Members of your congregation who were most likely to be directly affected by the disaster or tragedy.

Members who might need special help due to physical or emotional barriers.

Remember to ask members about the needs of their neighbors.

- Stay in touch with key leadership in your community, synod and Lutheran Disaster Response. They can provide a broader picture as well as bring aid into your community.

**Emergency personnel.** Ask to stay informed about the situation. Ask how you can help, whether there is information you can pass on, or support or relief you can provide to emergency workers.

**Your synod office.** Share what is going on with your congregation, community and what is going on with you.

**The Lutheran Disaster Response coordinator and your Lutheran social service agency.** Share your information, don’t hesitate to ask for additional support and guidance, and inquire whether and how you can be of assistance.

Make sure the information you are sharing with various key leaders is consistent and as current as possible. In the impact phase, things change rapidly and communication can be difficult.

**If you do go out into the community, wear something that clearly identifies you and your role.** Emergency personnel and others need to know who is on the streets and whether it is wise for them to be there. If they know who you are, they may also seek your services for specific situations.

Do not assume the problems will just go away. Recovery will take much support and time. Talk to your fellow pastors to see how they are doing.

*Remember: You are not alone.*

*Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you (Psalm 33:22).*

**OUTREACH:**

The focus of spiritual and emotional care during the impact phase is to attend to and relieve emotional pain and help individuals function, which includes helping them to find resources to meet their physical needs. Due to the chaos directly following a disaster or tragedy, there may be gaps in or duplication of aid. Some individuals may be afraid, confused, angry, or in a state of shock or denial. Some may feel compelled to attempt “heroic” acts.

**Now is the time to:**

- Let survivors know your role in the congregation. If you are a pastor, consider wearing a clerical collar or some other item that clearly identifies you with the congregation. Emergency response and other community leaders need to know who you are. Survivors need to be able to distinguish you from national and government services as well as from spontaneous volunteers who just show up and may or may not be trustworthy.
- Follow and encourage others to follow the instructions of local and national government agencies. If a crime was committed, the police or sheriff will be in charge of the scene and the response. If there was a natural disaster, emergency management, fire, police or the National Guard will be in charge.
- Direct survivors to needed assistance, particularly emergency services.
- Reassure survivors that they are safe, providing that is true. Otherwise direct them to safety.
- Let survivors share their stories. Focus on them.
- Take time to listen with sincerity and concern.
- Pray with victims, survivors, and others impacted by the disaster.
- If guilt is an issue at this stage, listen to what survivors are saying before reassuring them that the tragedy was not their fault. Realize, however, there is “reasonable” and “unreasonable” guilt. For example, a worker in a plant which exploded may have reason to believe that her actions did have something to do with the event. On the other hand, a child may think that if he had not argued with his mother that morning, the tornado would not have come.

**CHILDREN**

- Talk with children. They will need to know from you and other adults that it is safe to share their fears, doubts and faith. Be accepting of all their feelings even when you do not agree with them. Encourage them to express their feelings by drawing pictures or acting out their feelings in a safe place.

**THOSE IN ACUTE DISTRESS**

- Refer people in acute psychiatric distress to Red Cross or clinical mental health or victim assistance staff. Connect with emergency responders providing mental health services and victim assistance.

The goal of crisis response is to help anyone impacted by disaster to become healthy survivors who function well in their everyday lives. It is not to solve all the problems. Know your limitations. Victims, survivors, or others who have been impacted will never be the same, but they can be healthy and strong and even healthier and stronger because of the coping skills they learn in their recovery from the trauma.

*I lift my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1–2).*

**CHECKLIST FOR IMMEDIATELY AFTER IMPACT**

- Assess and care for your needs and those of your family
- Follow directions of emergency management
- Help assess the situation, offering appropriate care to those you encounter

**IMMEDIATE RESPONSE/RECOIL**

This is the time when crisis intervention is most likely to be needed and grief counseling may begin. After a tragedy, individuals are overwhelmed; many of them are in shock. The most powerful tool in healing is for victims to tell their stories.

As soon as it is safe, walk through the affected areas and listen to individuals. You will not only help them in their healing process but will also be able to identify specific needs. Report the needs you hear to a Lutheran Disaster Response coordinator, emergency personnel or other designated helping services, as appropriate.

During the response phase, survivors are concerned about safety, though some may be in denial about the extent of their needs. Those whose homes have been damaged will concentrate on finding a safe, sanitary, temporary living environment.

You can expect to encounter individuals who are frightened, confused, angry or feel guilty or helpless. Some may feel that they have been or may be abandoned.

#### CARE FOR SELF:

Take time to talk with someone to relieve your own stress. You, too, have been impacted. Talk with a mentor or friend who will listen to you in a nonjudgmental way and will also honestly reflect back how he or she sees you are functioning.

- Continue to care for yourself by getting enough rest, nutrition, exercise and down time.
- Continue to care for your family.
- Continue daily prayer and devotions

#### CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY AS A SPIRITUAL LEADER:

For many reasons, members of your congregation need to share in the ministry of disaster recovery. Not only are their gifts and resources important, but it is also an opportunity to see the world as God sees it and experience God's Spirit working through and around them. Communicate the needs as well as important understandings and guidelines for disaster work with your congregation. Know your personal limitations. At this point, the response leadership team needs to start clarifying and prioritizing the needs and think through specific ways the congregation is able to help.

#### CHECK IN WITH CHURCH STAFF:

- How is your staff?
- What are their needs?
- Share needs or concerns with the synod office.

#### ASSIGN CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERS OR COMMITTEES TO ADDRESS EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Conduct a damage assessment of the church property. Do not begin repairs until the damage is fully documented. Take pictures.
- Contact your insurance company.
- Assess the needs of the community around your church.
- Coordinate volunteers for transportation needs, clean-up work, food drives, hospitality, donations, etc.

- Relate to the media – unless this is a task you will undertake yourself.

#### STAFF AND RESPONSE TEAM LEADERS:

- Keep your church leaders informed.
- Stay in touch with other local congregational and community leaders.
- Determine whether you or the congregation needs additional assistance. You may wish, for example, to contact a retired pastor or ask pastors from other communities for support.

#### TOGETHER WITH THE RESPONSE LEADERSHIP TEAM AND OTHER MINISTRY LEADERS IN THE PARISH, IDENTIFY THE NEED FOR:

- Special worship or healing services, and plan them.
- Assistance with worship and Sunday school for the coming Sunday and weeks.
- Support and counseling for caregivers.
- Services to help special populations such as children, the physically and mentally challenged, the elderly, the home-bound, and others with special needs. (Children may need activities, child care or special counseling.)

#### AND DON'T FORGET TO:

- Work with your Lutheran Disaster Response leaders, your local ministerial alliance, interfaith recovery organizations, victim assistance, mental health agencies, and other organizations as they provide relief and support.
- Work with volunteers and committees to find out who needs your personal attention within your congregation.
- Stay open to needs. Do not be afraid to ask how you can help.

#### DURING THE RECOIL/EARLY RECOVERY PHASE:

- Listen to those who need to talk about their feelings and experiences.
- Let them know they are emotionally safe with you.
- Do not be judgmental.
- Do not try to change their feelings.
- Direct them to safe shelter and other services when appropriate.
- Do not say, "I know how you feel." Instead, try: "I don't know how you feel, but can you share with me what it is

## DURING THE RECOIL/EARLY RECOVERY PHASE (cont.):

like?” or “I think I’ve had similar feelings, but can you tell me more about yours?”

- When in doubt, remember that silence can be golden. A physical presence is more important than carefully constructed theological statements.
- Be accepting of individuals’ feelings while helping them look at “unreasonable guilt” or possible misconceptions of the events leading to certain feelings.
- Work with survivors to help them regain control and authority.
- Identify and focus on positive reactions. Help them talk about what they have learned and how they are stronger and better.

*An 81-year-old man talks about losing his family Bible with his family history in it. Although his kids bought him a new family Bible for Christmas this year, he says, “It’s new, it’s pretty, but it’s not my family Bible.” Losses and experiences such as these take time and love to fade. That is what we see the volunteers do every day: They share with the homeowners as they work together on their homes and new memories.”*  
— Jean Percy, construction coordinator for Lutheran Disaster Response.



## CHECKLIST FOR THE EARLY DAYS AFTER

- Continue self-care
- Continue to stay informed
- Continue to assist with assessment within the congregation and community
- Use your skills to offer emotional and spiritual support

*Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!  
Give light to my eyes... (Psalm 13:3)*

## RECOVERY

During the recovery phases, those who have suffered losses begin to look toward the new future.

During these phases:

- Help survivors find healing by participating as much as possible in the recovery so that they can feel ownership of the decisions and changes that occur.
- Be aware that new needs will emerge. Some people who did not previously ask for help will find they have depleted their physical, financial, emotional and spiritual resources and need support to help them recover.
- The response of local churches becomes increasingly important as disaster response agencies leave.

Disaster response is confusing. It can be overwhelming and it goes on for months or years. A community-organized response gets the most help for the people who need it while giving you the support you need to continue your ministry. As always, work with Lutheran Disaster Response and keep the synod informed. Be involved with your ministerial alliance and support the ecumenical response.

Remember: Individuals who survive a disaster will emerge as different people. Life as they once knew it cannot return to what it was in the past. Therefore, it is important to help survivors look to the future and work to establish a new definition of what is normal in their lives.

## CARE FOR SELF:

- Continue to care for yourself by getting enough rest, nutrition, exercise and down time.
- Continue to care for your family.
- Continue to talk with trusted mentors or friends in order to relieve your own stress and keep your priorities clear.
- Continue daily prayer and devotions

## CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY AS A SPIRITUAL LEADER

Continue to use your skills to provide the support people need as they move from victim to survivor. The following can be used with one person or with a group of people. Make sure everyone knows the limits of confidentiality.

## ENCOURAGE SURVIVORS TO TELL THEIR STORY

Disaster survivors need to tell their stories again and again. Their stories will change as they gain emotional control of their reactions. Consider asking survivors to relate their story with biblical narratives as a way of engaging faith and realizing God's presence in it.

To help survivors you can:

- Validate the legitimacy of their feelings and reactions.
- Let them know that God will be with them every step of the way.
- Seek appropriate help if their thoughts or actions put them or others in danger.

The following are common and normal spiritual and behavioral reactions to a traumatic event. People may have one, some, or all of the following:

- Anger at God
- Feeling distant from God
- Withdrawal from church
- Uncharacteristic church involvement
- Sudden turn toward God
- Familiar faith practices seem empty (prayers, scriptures, hymns)
- Church rituals and sacraments seem empty
- Belief that God is powerless
- Loss of meaning and purpose
- Sense of isolation (from God, church members, clergy)
- Questioning of one's basic beliefs
- Believing God is not in control
- Believing God does not care
- Belief that we have failed God

Be cautious about how you respond as you listen. Instead of "I know how you feel," try: "Can you tell me more?" Allow people to ask their "God Questions" such as "Why did this happen?" "Where is God?" "How could God allow such a thing?" These are also expressions of grief and mourning and, as such, need to be acknowledged more than answered. Avoid theologizing or offering platitudes. Accompanying people as they ask the difficult questions helps them to heal. It may also be helpful to remind the one with whom you are speaking that faithful people throughout the ages have asked the same questions and to share resources such as laments. While it is not necessary to refrain from expressing your conviction that God is still present, it is possible to do so without forcing this belief on the one who is struggling.

When in doubt, silence can be golden. The most powerful response may be that you are willing to just listen to things that people are afraid you will judge harshly, criticize or reject.

As it becomes appropriate, help survivors:

- Look to the future, see their options, weigh the consequences of each alternative and feel supported in their decisions.
- Be realistic with their goals and decisions.
- Find appropriate resources.
- Realize they can learn from this disaster. They may, for example, have developed new coping skills, they may be stronger, and they may now be moving toward a new definition of what is normal.
- Realize that God is present in every situation. Ask, "Where did you see God today?"

**CHECKLIST FOR THE RECOVERY PHASES**

- Continue self-care
- Continue to stay informed
- Continue to partner with leaders within and outside the congregation
- Continue to use listening and other skills for emotional and spiritual support

*Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with all of you (2 Thessalonians 3:16).*

## WORSHIP IN TIMES OF DISASTER

As noted above, disaster is a time of deep spiritual questions and an opportunity to claim and proclaim the gospel promise of presence, rebirth and renewal. Worshiping communities should make every effort to resume worship and spiritual care as soon as possible after devastation.

### CHRISTIAN WORSHIP:

- Affirms that God is still operating.
- Affirms that the world is still open and we are not victims of fate.
- Affirms that human agents, as creatures made in God's image, share God's image and God's life-giving activities.
- Forms the shape, character and tone of those affected by the disaster.
- Is an act of embracing a new future. Worship is reality making, especially in its praise.
- Is an active step in proclaiming new life and the rebuilding of community.

### WHO PLANS AND LEADS WORSHIP?

In most cases, the pastor or rostered leader, assisted by other congregational leaders, will plan and lead worship as in non-disaster times. However, if those leaders are impacted by the disaster and are prevented from leadership, worship can still happen. Seek assistance from other local congregations, conference, cluster or synod. A leader from a neighboring community may be able to help. If a designated leader does not emerge immediately, gather the community and seek the gifts of those gathered to lead singing, praying, Bible reading and proclamation.

### WHERE AND WHEN TO WORSHIP?

If possible, meet for worship at the regularly scheduled time and place. Make provisions if the worship space is not usable: use an alternate space on the property or find another location for meeting. When seeking another location, it is best to find one place that can be utilized for a long time rather than changing locations frequently. Consider an informal or formal rental agreement with the alternate location if this is the case.

Also consider how the Christian community can and will gather as a whole. Community healing services or prayer vigils can be powerful. Regular worship may be combined with another worshiping community, as appropriate and as the opportunity arises.

### GET THE WORD OUT

Current digital technology suggests that cellphones with connectivity to the Internet will be quick to resume service after a disaster. Social media will flourish. Radio will also be available. Hand-printed or copied signs may be your best local option for reaching those who are not able to access social media. Find any and all ways possible to announce worship services and opportunities for prayer to the community.

### PLANNING

When planning worship after a disaster first ask, what do you have available? Printed resources are not essential. Trust



what is in the bones of the faithful and follow a basic and predictable format for Christian worship: gathering, proclaiming the word, praying, sharing the meal and sending into the world. Worship resources particular to times after a disaster are available at [www.ELCA.org/Resources/Disaster](http://www.ELCA.org/Resources/Disaster).

- Choose biblical texts that speak a word of comfort and promise to those affected by disaster. Ask the community about Bible stories that resonate with their current situation.
- Consider including a time of lament that names the destruction and sorrow. All laments include a turn to promise and renewal in the gospel. Be careful about congregational responses. If a printed bulletin cannot be produced, use short and repetitive responses for the congregation.
- Include significant time for prayer. Consider offering prayer stations with laying on of hands and anointing so that the presence of God is not only spoken but felt.
- Sing songs that are known by the community and recall times of comfort and promise. If no bulletin is available, choose songs with easily sung refrains or songs known in the community “by heart.”

#### ONGOING SPIRITUAL CARE

Consider how the congregation can offer space and support for meditation and prayer outside of formal worship gatherings.

- Create a place for prayer and meditation away from the stress of the disaster.
- Consider offering a way for people to write down their prayer petition for others to pray.
- Find congregational volunteers who have the gifts of prayer and empathy who would be willing to welcome people into the space.
- Communicate the congregation’s availability for prayer or safe-space to the community.

#### FOR COMMUNITIES RESPONDING TO DISASTER OUTSIDE THEIR AREA

When a disaster occurs outside of your worshiping community, worship and prayer are essential to response because we are all joined together in our need and the promise of new life. This not only tunes the congregation into the need, it reminds the members of the necessity for preparedness and ongoing attentiveness to the community.

- Name places affected by disaster in the prayers of intercession in weekly worship.
- Send out prayer petitions after disaster on your congregation's social media and communication systems.

#### RESOURCES

Resources offered by the ELCA include hymn suggestions, litanies and prayers. Here are a few things to begin your planning.

#### THE SUNDAY SERVICE

- Name the impact of the disaster.
- Serve Holy Communion.
- Worship in the church as you are able or worship in temporary facilities.
- Pray for children, emergency personnel and for recovery.

#### SUGGESTIONS

- Remember that people will be at different stages of loss and recovery. Sharing stories helps people relate to one another. Carefully construct worship so that all stages are addressed with hope at one point or another.
- Tell about how this disaster affected you. Your personal witness will help others find words to express how it has affected them. Do not use others' stories without their permission.
- During the worship service, ask people to turn to their neighbors and share what the disaster has meant to them and how it has affected them.
- Use the children's sermon or sharing time to connect the hope and security we share in God's love for children.

#### BIBLE PASSAGES

- **(Psalm 100:5)** *"For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."*
- **(Psalm 46:1, 7)** *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."*
- **(Romans 8:31)** *"What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?"*
- **(Romans 8:37–39)** *"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
- **(Psalm 55:22)** *"Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you."*
- **(Psalm 9:9–10)** *"The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you."*
- **(Psalm 23:4)** *"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."*
- **(Psalm 57:1)** *"Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by."*

**Worship resources can be found at**  
[www.ELCA.org/disaster/resources](http://www.ELCA.org/disaster/resources).

# Conclusion

In times of disaster in our communities, people will seek the refuge of the church, because it is a community meeting place, because they may find shelter and food, or because they believe that God is there. People in our communities will likely come knocking on our doors whether or not we are prepared to open them. It is the hope that this guide can help leadership in congregations not only be prepared to open church doors, but be ready and willing to faithfully do so.

Congregational leadership that takes on the challenge of completing the worksheets in this guidebook will find that their efforts will lead to greater resiliency for all types of challenges, from meeting the needs of those affected by a local home fire, to serving as a warming shelter during a winter power outage, to offering worship to commemorate national catastrophes, to leading long-term recovery efforts after regional flooding.

Quick reference guides such as the resources in the appendix can be “pulled off the shelf” to assist decision makers when something happens and situations are chaotic. Basic checklists for preparedness and response can remind leadership of simple steps to take to secure life and property.

Congregations that take steps to be prepared are those that are most able to step out and meet needs of neighbors and

congregation members alike. The most vulnerable in our communities are often made even more vulnerable in disaster. In the case where a congregation can provide leadership for long-term recovery the most vulnerable in our communities are not left behind.

Finally, it is important to remember that a congregation is not alone. Not only are there resources from the Lutheran Disaster Response network to support congregations in being prepared and responding to disaster, but there are resources throughout our communities and indeed from around the country, both governmental and non-governmental, that are available to support congregations in their efforts at stepping up to serve communities in times of a disaster. **Thank you for your prayerful attention to disaster preparedness and response!**

# Appendices

PREPAREDNESS PLAN WORKSHEETS, TASKS #1–13

QUICK PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

QUICK RESPONSE CHECKLIST

WORSHIP PLANNING WORKSHEET

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS' ROLE

MEDIA MANAGEMENT

WHAT A CONGREGATION CAN DO

PROPERTY DAMAGE

MUCK AND GUT

DISASTER RECOVERY VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION PACKET

CONTACTS, PARTNERS AND RESOURCES



# Congregational Disaster Preparedness Cover Sheet

## **NAME OF CONGREGATION**

Phone:

Address:

Email:

Website:

## **CONGREGATIONAL DISASTER COORDINATOR**

Name:

Phone numbers:

Email:

## **DATE PLAN COMPLETED**

Dates updated:

## **DATE PLAN IS DUE TO BE REVIEWED**

**WORKSHEET**

# The Preparedness Team, Vision, Parameters and Goals

*Repeat for each one.*

**PREPAREDNESS TEAM CHAIRPERSON**

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

**TEAM MEMBER**

Name:

Role/designated tasks:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

**TEAM MEMBER**

Name:

Role/designated tasks:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

**MEETING SCHEDULE**

**VISION AND GOALS**

**Vision and understanding of faith/God/theological basis for the Preparedness plan:**

**Parameters of your work:** (Focus on something that threatens the building, on the building and response to surrounding community if it is impacted, or focus is on all of the above.)

**Goals:** (e.g., ensure the safety of all who are present in our facilities.)

1)

2)

3)

4)

**WORKSHEET**

# Designate Members of a Response Team

**LOCATION TO MEET WHEN DISASTER IS IMMINENT OR HAS OCCURRED**

**SECONDARY LOCATION**

**CHIEF DECISION MAKER AFTER DISASTER**

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Responsibilities:

**BACKUP DECISION MAKER AFTER DISASTER**

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Responsibilities:

**PARISH LEGAL COUNSEL NAME**

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Responsibilities:

**SPOKESPERSON TO THE MEDIA NAME**

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Responsibilities:

WORKSHEET

# Designate Members of a Response Team (cont.)

## INSURANCE LIAISON

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Responsibilities:

## OTHER ROLES

Name or position:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Responsibilities:

WORKSHEET

# Conduct a Disaster Risk Assessment

Hazard:	Probability	Magnitude	Warning	Duration	Risk Priority
	Highly likely	Catastrophic	Minimal	12+ hours	High
	Likely	Critical	6-12 hours	6-12 hours	Medium
	Possible	Limited	12-24 hours	3-6 hours	Low
	Unlikely	Negligible	>24 hours	>3 hours	NO risk

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	Likely	Critical	6-12 hours	6-12 hours	Medium
	Possible	Limited	12-24 hours	3-6 hours	Low
	Unlikely	Negligible	>24 hours	>3 hours	NO risk

**WORKSHEET**

# Inventory Assets

**HUMAN ASSETS**

Indicate storage location for each contact list inside the church building and outside the church building.

**DIRECTORY OF MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION**

Electronic location/passwords:

Physical copies:

How are members with special needs identified on the directory?

**DIRECTORY OF STAFF**

Electronic location/passwords:

Physical copies:

**PEOPLE WITH DISASTER RELATED SKILLS/CERTIFICATIONS AND RESOURCES USEFUL IN TIMES OF DISASTER**

*Repeat as necessary.*

Name:

Skills:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Have background and abuse checks been completed? If so, when?

**OUTSIDE GROUPS THAT USE THE BUILDING**

*Repeat as necessary.*

Name of partner individual or group:

Brief description:

Name of contact person:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

WORKSHEET

# Inventory Assets (cont.)

**PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY** (other communities of faith, schools, businesses, organizations, synod, government) *Repeat as necessary.*

Name of partner individual or group:

Brief description:

Name of contact person:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

NAME OF OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS *Repeat as necessary.*

Brief description:

Contact person(s):

Contact numbers:

Contact email:

Resources and skills within that group:

CERTIFICATIONS Attach a copy and other important info.

## MINISTRIES OF THE CONGREGATION

NAME OF MINISTRY/GROUP WITHIN CONGREGATION  
*Repeat as necessary.*

Brief description:

Contact person(s):

Contact numbers:

Contact email:

Resources and skills within that group:

## PHYSICAL ASSET INVENTORY

DATE INVENTORY CONDUCTED:

NEXT INVENTORY DATE PLANNED (ANNUAL):

PERSON WHO WILL COMPLETE ANNUAL INVENTORY:

Name:

Address – street and email:

Phone contacts:

WORKSHEET

# Inventory Assets (cont.)

ITEM

Description:

Location:

Serial number:

Purchase cost:

Current value:

Vendor:

Service contract #:

Contact name:

Phone:

Address – street and email:

INSURANCE INFO *Repeat as necessary.*

Insured by:

For the amount of (or included in a general policy):

**RESOURCES FOR DISASTER RESPONSE**

ITEM *Repeat as necessary.*

LOCATION:

*Who has access? Name/Phone/Email*

*Who knows how/has permission/license to operate?*

Name:

Land Phone/Cellphone:

Email:

**ITEMS TO BE REMOVED IF BUILDING IS THREATENED**

ITEM *Repeat as necessary.*

Location:

*Who is to remove it? Name/Phone/Email*

Where it is to be taken

Special handling:

WORKSHEET

# Inventory Assets (cont.)

**ITEMS FOR SPECIAL PROTECTION IF BUILDING IS THREATENED**

ITEM *Repeat as necessary.*

Location:

What protective steps are to be taken (e.g., put in safe, wrap in a tarp, elevate, etc.):

Who is to do this?  
Contact info:

Name:

Phone:

Email:

**FINANCIAL ASSETS**

ACCOUNT/INVESTMENT:

Bank/Company:

Account number:

Address:

Contact person:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

Who has access/password:

OTHER NOTES:

LINES OF CREDIT

Bank/Company:

Account number:

Address:

Contact person:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

Who has access/password:

OTHER NOTES:

WORKSHEET

# Inventory Assets (cont.)

## FINANCIAL ASSETS (cont.)

### LOANS AND OTHER LIABILITIES

Bank/Company:

Account number:

Address:

Contact person:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

Who has access/password:

OTHER NOTES:

STEPS TO PREVENT FISCAL MISMANAGEMENT:

**WORKSHEET**

# Vulnerabilities

**PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

How do you ensure that property is kept in good repair?

Who is responsible for making sure that regular maintenance and upkeep happens?

What is the process for identifying needed maintenance, approving expenditures and executing repairs?

When does the congregation's process work best? When does the process break down?

STEPS TO BE TAKEN:

**VULNERABILITIES**

What physical vulnerabilities exist in the congregation's physical plant? (e.g., located in low lying area, near industrial use rail road tracks or highways, streets regularly flood, basement takes in water, roof is 25 years old) *Repeat as necessary.*

VULNERABILITY:

Steps needed to address:

VULNERABILITY:

Steps needed to address:

WHAT MEASURES ARE IN PLACE TO:

Prevent accidents?

Mitigate liability?

STEPS TO BE TAKEN:

**INSURANCE**

Identify insurance coverage levels for:

- Injuries and accidents
- Misconduct or abuse
- Fiscal mismanagement
- Damage to property

STEPS TO BE TAKEN:

**OTHER IDENTIFIED VULNERABILITIES:** (e.g., aging computer system, not enough phones in strategic areas of the building, not enough people know who is cleared to work with children, treasurer is not bonded, etc.)

STEPS TO BE TAKEN:

**WORKSHEET**

# Identify Partners, Agreements and Resources

**GOVERNMENT** *Repeat as necessary.*

Name of position, office or agency:

Services provided:

Address:

Website:

Contact name:

Phone:

Email:

**INSURANCE AND LEGAL COUNSEL** *Repeat as necessary.*

Insurance company:

Policy #:

Contact person:

Phone numbers:

Address:

Email:

How a claim is made:

Name of legal counsel:

Contact name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

**LOCAL PARTNERS** *Repeat as necessary.*

Name of partner:

Location:

Description of ministries:

Description of resources:

Agreements for partnership that have or might be made in times of crisis or disaster:

Website:

Contact name:

Position:

Phone:

Email:

WORKSHEET

# Identify Partners, Agreements and Resources (cont.)

## SYNOD/LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE/ELCA

Synod:

Disaster contact person(s):

Position:

Phone numbers:

Address:

Email:

## LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

THE REV. MICHAEL STADIE  
8765 W. Higgins Road  
Chicago, IL 60631  
Michael.Stadie@elca.org

THE REV. JOSEPH CHU  
8765 W. Higgins Road  
Chicago, IL 60631  
Joseph.Chu@elca.org

## LOCAL LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE AFFILIATE

Name of local social ministry organization affiliate:

Contact person:

Address:

Website:

Phone:

Email:

Phone:

Email:

**WORKSHEET**

# Decision Making Process

What is the regular decision making process for starting ministries and allocating resources within the congregation?

Articulate a plan for a decision making process in times of disaster:

How will this process break down if a disaster occurs that impedes the decision makers' ability to travel or communicate?

How does this plan need to be approved and communicated before a disaster occurs?

WORKSHEET

# Communication Plan

## STAY ALERT TO POSSIBLE THREAT

### COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Contact:

1. How is the congregation linked into the local emergency response communication system?

2. Communication between and from leaders during emergency and disaster

Identify how the response team, those in charge of ministries and activities and those within the church facilities will communicate in times of threat or actual disaster.

Identify how the leadership team will communicate with emergency management, other community partners, and congregation members. Offer alternatives that take into account whether or not electrical power is available.

3. Communication with members of the congregation

(e.g., Phone trees, electronic messaging)

Methods that don't rely on electricity or cell towers could include message boards at the front of the church, newspaper ads, flyers posted at grocery stores or community bulletin boards.

Identify how the disaster preparedness plan is to be communicated to all involved including not only members of the congregation, but also outside organizations which use the facilities and local emergency management.

**List that plan here:**

WORKSHEET

# Emergency Operations

*Evacuation means that all occupants must leave a specific area.*

PLAN:

PRACTICE THE PLAN:

POST THE PLAN:

*Lock down means that all occupants inside a facility must remain inside and prevent any unauthorized person from entering the building.*

PLAN:

PRACTICE THE PLAN:

POST THE PLAN:

*Shelter in place means that occupants stay within a facility, perhaps for an extended period of time.*

PLAN:

PRACTICE THE PLAN:

POST THE PLAN:

**WORKSHEET**

# Immediate Plans for Continuity of Ministry

WORSHIP:

OUTREACH/SOCIAL MINISTRIES:

ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS:

NURSERY/PRE-SCHOOL, IF APPLICABLE:

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:

OTHER MINISTRIES:

WORKSHEET

## Tasks #11–13

### Task #11: Obtain Approval of the Plan

HOW WILL THE PREPAREDNESS PLAN BE APPROVED OFFICIALLY IN THE CONGREGATION:

### Task #13: The Process Grows and Deepens Over Time

WRITE DOWN WHEN AND HOW THE PLAN WILL BE PRACTICED, REVIEWED AND ADJUSTED:

### Task #12: Communicate, Practice, Review and Adjust the Plan

HOW WILL THE PREPAREDNESS PLAN BE TAUGHT, PRACTICED AND REVIEWED:

# Quick Preparedness Checklist

Date updated: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## HUMAN ASSETS

CONTACT INFORMATION (PHONE NUMBERS, EMAIL, MAILING ADDRESS)

Pastor:

Congregational President and Vice President:

Media Spokesperson:

Any other decision makers for disaster responding:

**LOCATIONS OF** HARD COPIES OF CONTACT INFORMATION FOR STAFF AND CONGREGATION MEMBERS.

**LIST** KEY COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

## PHYSICAL ASSETS

### *Note*

Key items to be removed if the building is threatened:

Who has access to any special codes/passwords/keys for operating the building:

Any other protective measures that must be taken if the building is threatened:

Location of sheltering or survival kits, generators, etc.:

Designated area for sheltering in place:

Designated evacuation location:

## FINANCIAL ASSETS

**CONTACT INFORMATION** FOR THOSE WHO CAN ACCESS FINANCIAL AND INSURANCE ACCOUNTS:

**LOCATION OF** FINANCIAL RECORDS AND BACKUPS:

## CRITICAL MINISTRIES OF THE CONGREGATION

**LIST** KEY MINISTRIES AND ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS IF THEY CANNOT BE HELD ONSITE:

# Quick Response Checklist

Date updated: \_\_\_\_\_

## AFTER LIVES AND PROPERTY ARE SECURED

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*See sections “What a congregation can do” and “What to do if your property is damaged.”*

## IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

*Call 9-1-1*

*Follow emergency procedures for evacuation, lock down, or shelter in place.*

*Alert congregational leadership*

NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

*Alert synod and other relevant partners*

NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

**WORKSHEET**

# Worship Planning After Disaster

REGULAR WEEKLY WORSHIP TIME AND PLACE:

Will our worship focus on our community of faith, or is there a need and is this an appropriate time to gather for larger interdenominational worship

Do conditions exist so that the community can gather for worship as usual or close to usual?

COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR ANNOUNCING WORSHIP:

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT WORSHIP?

SPECIFIC PLANNING

Location:

Who will lead:

Worship books:

Bible passages:

Bible:

Musical instruments:

Songs:

Chairs:

Sound amplification:

Bread and wine:

Holy Communion distribution:



## Perspective on the Role of Christian Educators in a Disaster

*The basic building blocks of appropriate shelter and security enable children to utilize their God-given capacities to learn and react age-appropriately. When the natural order of the day is suddenly disrupted by circumstances that jeopardize personal safety, the predominant response is fear. Hurricanes, tornadoes, fires and floods disassemble children's basic framework of trust in adults to keep them safe. The world is suddenly dangerous and out of control. After such events, natural confusion ensues which further traumatizes the children. Many ties not only to the school but also to the community are damaged. The children's concern for the "safe haven" – their parents or siblings – becomes overwhelming as they react to the trauma. Separation anxiety and regression are to be expected.*

These times, as in all crises, have the possibility of providing powerful teaching moments. The calmness and order that the teacher and administrator present will lessen the traumatic impact on children. When caring adults understand and accept the children's natural reactions of fear and provide many moments of caring and reassurance, they are strengthened to overcome the present difficulties and better prepared to meet the future. They will be able to reassemble their trust of others and day-to-day events in a healthy way.

Jesus was clear to us that this world is not his kingdom (*John 18:36*). We are not in heaven yet! Christians fully recognize

that pain and death are the result of a sinful world and not God's original plan for God's people. The followers of Christ have a framework with which to help children understand traumatic community events. St. Paul's advice to Timothy holds true for us today as we sort through the difficult times to help children regain their security. "For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7). Again in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-what is good and acceptable and perfect."

You are the instrument through which God can display God's perfect will of love and strength. The healing begins at the difficult turning points in the lives of the children God sends you.

Adapted from *God's Care in Times of Crisis*, Grace Lutheran Church and School St. Petersburg, Florida.

### HELP FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

#### PARENT HANDOUT

##### **Suggestions for parents in responding to a tragedy**

When a child has been involved in a crisis or tragedy, the parents are important prime caregivers. These are some general suggestions to help you in talking with your child. Parents know their children best, and therefore can be alert to their individual needs, behavior and feelings. Jesus healed in many ways, sometimes by speaking a word, by lending a listening ear, by teaching, by touching and sometimes just being with the person in need. Love, listen and live the faith and hope that God has given you. We pray these suggestions will help you to minister to your child at this time. Please contact the school should you have questions or need additional help and suggestions.

## Perspective on the Role of Christian Educators in a Disaster (cont.)

BELOW ARE SUGGESTIONS THAT PARENTS CAN USE TO HELP A CHILD THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES.

- **Limit and avoid things that may re-traumatize your child or “rub in” the event.** Turn off the TV once you have basic information. When children watch TV replays of the event, they perceive that it is happening all over again. Be aware of what your child may be hearing and interpreting when adults are having conversations about the events. Are the adults only focusing on how bad things are and how they don't know what to do or is there a sense of support and working things out?
  - **Listen when your child wants to talk. Be available and accessible.** If your child does not want to talk, do not force discussion. Let your child know that you want to listen whenever s/he has the need to be with you.
  - **Check out what your child thinks and how he or she interprets what has happened and is going on.** Your child may have a distorted understanding of the situation. In ways that are age appropriate, help him/her to accurately know just enough about the situation.
  - **Accept your child's feelings.** Communicate your care, support, understanding and acceptance even when your child expresses feelings different from your own.
  - **Recognize and encourage the many different ways children express themselves,** including play, art and storytelling.
  - **Empathize with your child.** Let the child know you recognize and understand the sadness, confusion, anger, or other feelings that s/he is experiencing over the tragedy.
  - **Express yourself openly and honestly,** showing confidence that things will improve and life will go on.
- Share your faith. You serve as an important role model for your child and s/he will adopt similar behaviors and attitudes. It is okay to admit that at times you are sad or angry or discouraged, while at the same time assuring your child that God, you and others are working to make things better.
- **Be patient** and allow your child to recover at his/her own pace. It may be that your child will work through the grief again and again at different developmental stages of his/her life. Don't protect him/her from “threatening” topics or issues.
  - **Be tolerant** of temporary changes, but maintain as much of a sense of routine as possible. Provide opportunities for your child to engage in physical activities, especially if s/he seems to have excess energy. You may observe a lack of concentration, lack of interest in usual activities, a preoccupation with the events of the tragedy, unusual dependency, reluctance to be alone, sleeping or eating disturbances, or an excessive desire to talk. Most of these will be temporary and viewed as normal reactions.
  - **Allow each child his/her own reactions.** Remember children at different ages and stages of development can be very different. Your child may desire to be alone, to reflect and relax. If, however, you are concerned for your child's safety, do not allow him/her to be completely alone or isolated for long periods of time. Things may get worse before they get better.

*God's Care in Times of Crisis* Aid Association for Lutherans @1998, used with permission.

[www.CareinCrisis.com](http://www.CareinCrisis.com) Contact Rick@careincrisis.com or Megan@careincrisis.com



# Media Management

Photo: FEMA/Bob McMillan

*Media management is a critical component of dealing with a disaster. Media coverage is often times directly proportionate to the scope of the disaster – the larger or deadlier the disaster, the greater the coverage.*

Dealing with the media amid disaster may seem daunting. Good media coverage and accurate reports may, however, be valuable tools in promoting compassionate interest and assistance.

If approached by the media, you can choose whether or not to talk with them. You are not under an obligation to do so. If you do not feel comfortable speaking with the media on your own, you may want to contact your Lutheran Disaster Response US coordinator and ask for assistance.

KEEP THE FOLLOWING POINTS IN MIND:

1. **Be proactive.** Develop a plan now, so that you are prepared in the event of a disaster.
2. **Establish an ongoing relationship with the media via your ministerial associations.** Assemble and maintain a current list of contacts for local newspapers and radio and television stations, including reporters and editors who specialize in religious topics.

IF AND WHEN A DISASTER OCCURS:

1. **Designate a spokesperson to respond to media inquiries.** Make sure this spokesperson is available to the media. Having one spokesperson will keep the message and information clear.
2. **Wear your clerical collar or other clear symbol to identify yourself as a representative of the faith community.**

3. **Tell the truth.** Speak clearly and concisely. Include the known facts of the situation – who, what, when, where, how, why – and what you and your congregation are doing to help.
4. **Keep confidential information confidential.** Do not give victims' names.
5. **"I don't know" is an acceptable answer** to a reporter's question. If you promise to get back to a reporter, however, be sure to do so.
6. **Accommodate media deadlines** as much as possible.
7. If civil authorities are present, **redirect questions that may require their expertise** to them.
8. **Give credit and acknowledgment** where it is due.
9. **Project a positive and hopeful spirit.**
10. As you are able, **speak of the faith and trust you and others hold in God, and how this faith has been a support** in your caring for others.

For further information regarding media management and press relations, contact your Lutheran Disaster Response coordinator.

"Three things are important in the mist and wake of a disaster: Communication, communication, communication. Just as internal communication within the congregation is vital in sharing critical information, it is also important to have a voice to the public through the media. In some disasters the media will come to you. In others, you may need to seek them out. It is also helpful to discern whether or not it is necessary to make a statement or respond to questions."  
– John Scibilia, former director Lutheran Disaster Response of New York.



## How Can Your Congregation Serve the Community After a Disaster?

*Congregations can take an active role in the community in the wake of disaster. Our facilities, people and communication systems can be vital components of a quick response to people in great need.*

The following is a list of ideas to spark conversation and action in your congregation. Think about what your congregation already does well. Then consider how these gifts can be best utilized in the wake of a disaster.

### DURING AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER A DISASTER:

1. Urge members to check on their neighbors and vulnerable members of the community and of their congregation.
2. Find out and distribute information about where to get help immediately and in the short term including phone numbers of the local municipality, the Red Cross and the local Lutheran Disaster Response US affiliate. If a FEMA declaration is made for individual assistance, distribute FEMA contact information so that community members can get an identification number within 60 days of the declaration in order to qualify for assistance.
3. Provide hospitality for first-responders and people immediately affected by the disaster. If possible, open the church building as a place to wash up, use the telephone or Internet, get a hot meal, rest from the elements, and more.
4. Offer written prayers for people who are suffering and open the sanctuary for prayer and meditation.

### AFTER THE DISASTER:

1. Arrange to share meals or food supplies with those who need them.
2. Provide meeting space for community planning and leadership for local, long-term recovery teams.
3. Collect cleaning supplies that will be needed for recovery. Recovery organizations regularly distribute “Cleanup Buckets.” Supplies are often quickly diminished after a disaster and need to be replaced. Find out more information about the contents and the delivery of “Cleanup Buckets” by contacting your local disaster response representatives.
4. Do not collect clothing or other items unless you know what is needed and how the items will be distributed. Please do collect funds which can be donated directly to local rebuilding efforts through Lutheran Disaster Response US ([www.ELCA.org/disaster](http://www.ELCA.org/disaster)).
5. Warn people to be careful and be prepared to watch out for scams. Keep your congregation informed about the possibility of those who will take advantage of people desperate to clean up and rebuild.
6. Offer a safe place, leadership and resources for people to talk, pray and cope with suffering and loss.
7. Build volunteer teams to serve in local disaster response. Teams are utilized for a day or longer – depending upon the need and availability. Connect to local volunteer organizations who are responding to disasters.
8. Be prepared to house and support recovery workers and begin doing so as soon as they arrive in the area. Communicate your willingness and resources for hospitality to get connected with the recovery efforts.

## How Can Your Congregation Serve the Community After a Disaster?

### AFTER THE DISASTER *(cont.)*:

9. Consider hosting a volunteer, preparedness or response workshop at your congregation.
10. Listen for whom may be underserved. Think of what can be done. Do what you can to meet the need while advocating for unmet needs through larger volunteer agencies and efforts.
11. Provide for childcare services or babysitting so that adults can have a break and/or can focus on what they need to do and so that children have relief from the stress of cleanup.
12. Check on whether other churches have been damaged. Offer your worship or educational space for interim use.

### TO BE PREPARED FOR NEXT TIME:

1. Make sure that more than one person has the log in and password information for changing the church website, answering machine greeting, Facebook page and more. Work through your procedure for cancelling or adjusting worship services or other activities. Teach congregational members to get congregational information in various centralized communication locations: answering machine messages, website, Facebook pages, group text messages, etc.
2. Help build networks for the vulnerable people in the community who are likely to be more adversely impacted by limited mobility, utility shut-offs, etc. Match up vulnerable people with members of the congregation who are geographically close to them.
3. Find out how emergency response works in your community. Build relationships, gather contact information and distribute the information to members of your congregation so that you are ready for the next disaster. Consider adding a page to your congregational directory that includes emergency contact information.



Photo: FEMA/Greg Henshall

## What to Do if your Property is Damaged During a Natural Disaster

*Immediately register with a Disaster Recovery Center, American Red Cross and, if a federal disaster declaration has been made, with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). If a federal emergency is declared, register with FEMA even if you believe you are well-insured or have no damage. To be eligible for FEMA assistance, you must register within the given time period, (usually 60 days from the day of declaration.) FEMA will publish an 800 number with deadline for survivors to apply for assistance. This number will be listed in newspapers and aired over the radio and on television. It will also be published on [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).*

IF YOUR HOME OR PROPERTY IS DAMAGED, PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO:

- Availability of water, electricity or gas.
- Functioning of sanitation systems
- Function of heating and air-conditioning systems
- Roof damage, fallen trees, and downed electrical lines
- Damaged windows, doors, waterlines, and plumbing fixtures
- Flooding of buildings and grounds.

Promptly report your claim to your insurance agent and give a description of the damage. Do not make any permanent repairs to property before damage is documented and assessed.

Photograph (if possible) or make a list of damaged, destroyed, or missing property. Compile a room-by-room inventory of missing or damaged items and try to include manufacturers' names, dates, places of purchase, and prices. Try to locate receipts or proofs of purchase, especially for large appliances.

Contact your city or county building department before beginning any – even temporary – repairs. Your city or county may have codes and regulations for repairs, even if they are temporary.

IDENTIFY YOUR HOUSE:

- If your entire home or building is damaged or destroyed, paint your address, contact information, and the name of the insurance company on a visible section of the building.
- If you move to a temporary housing or a shelter, paint the phone number of where you can be reached on the roof or outside wall of your home.

Follow safety instructions from police and fire officials.

Be careful during cleanup. Many injuries are caused by chain saws and other equipment that were not handled properly.

Know what you are activating if you hook up a generator. It may “light up” the entire electrical system if the proper breakers are not in place.



## Muck and Gut

(Based on the *Train the Trainer* manual prepared by Jean and Dale Percy of Lutheran Disaster Response.)

### GOAL

The goal of mucking and gutting is to begin the process of cleaning out and preparing a damaged structure for further recovery work, usually repair.

It is the first step in assisting a resident to return to a dwelling that is

- Safe
- Sanitary
- Secure
- Functional

In disaster response work, the damage to the structure may have been due to water in the building after storm or flood, fire, wind, tornado, earthquake, explosion, etc.

One of the most hopeful reasons for mucking and gutting is to help a family to repair their dwelling. Sometimes, however, a building that may eventually be torn down may be mucked and gutted in order to minimize threats to the health of a neighborhood that can be caused by mold and other contaminants. In any case, this dirty and strenuous work is vitally important.

Never forget that you are working on someone's home. If homeowners are present, take time to listen them. Telling their story is part of their healing. If a homeowner needs to talk a lot, it may be helpful to have one member of your team focus some time on listening while the others get on with the work. Always behave respectfully.

This manual is offered as a quick guide to the process of removing damaged areas of a structure in a safe manner

without doing more damage to the structure than is necessary. It is designed for individual volunteers and team leaders to read ahead of time as well as use for a reference on site.

### BEFORE YOU GO

KNOW WHAT YOU ARE SIGNING UP/VOLUNTEERING FOR:

Where will you be going?

What will you be doing?

Who will be designating and overseeing the work?

Have they obtained written permission of the owner of the structure?

What facilities and equipment will they provide?

What are the arrangements for cleanup and decontamination of workers and tools?

What are you expected to bring?

### BE PREPARED.

HEALTH:

**Are tetanus shots up to date?**

This should be a minimal requirement for work on a site.

**How about hepatitis shots?**

This is highly recommended if you will be working in a highly contaminated area.

Remember, flood waters often contain fecal material and other pollutants.

Hepatitis immunization usually consists of a series of two or three shots and it takes several months to get the complete series.

## Muck and Gut (cont.)

HEALTH (cont.):

### Do you have known allergies, especially to mold?

If so, this is probably not the place for you to volunteer.

### How is your general health?

This is strenuous and dirty work in an area which has probably been contaminated.

**If you are pregnant, you should not be doing this work.**

### Do you have:

Asthma?

Back problems?

Heart conditions?

High blood pressure?

MAKE SURE SOMEONE ON SITE KNOWS YOUR HEALTH CONDITIONS.

If you are a group leader, collect this information ahead of time and keep it with you, being sure to respect confidentiality.

### PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Every worker should have and use a minimum of:

- Gloves: work and rubber, latex or vinyl
- Safety glasses and shields
- Sturdy foot wear (work and /or rubber boots)
- No open toed shoes or flip flops are allowed on site.
- Dust masks (fiber filled) – no less than an N95.

The following may also be needed and may be provided on site or by your group leader:

If in doubt, take them along.

- Respirators These are to be used in areas known to be contaminated and are essential if spraying cleaning and

disinfecting solutions.

- Respirators need to be fitted. Not all respirators fit every face. Make sure yours fits snugly.
- Canisters are for one person.
- Protective suits including hoods and booties.

ALSO

- Wear old clothes to work in, including long pants, long sleeves and a hat.
- Bring sun screen and bug repellent
- Bring along clean clothes, shampoo and soap in case you need to and are able to change and even wash up when work is completed. You will not want to contaminate your vehicle or home when you return
- Bring a bag for dirty clothes
- Bring a bag for dirty tools and equipment – in case you cannot clean them adequately

## Muck and Gut (cont.)

### GUTTING TOOLBOX:

- Hammers
- First aid kit for every site and every vehicle
- Sledge hammers
- Crow bars
- Nail pullers/ cat's paw
- Brooms and shovels
- Rakes
- Wheel barrels
- Ladders
- Screw drivers
- Pliers and wire cutters
- Hand saws
- Wrenches
- Safety equipment
- Battery drills\*
- Power saws\*
- Reciprocal saws\*
- Electrical source (generator)\*
- Chain saws\*

\* *Tools that should only be used by trained volunteers. Age limits may apply.*

### IF YOU ARE A GROUP LEADER:

**Remember that youth 16 and under should not be exposed to mold, other contaminants, or sprayed cleaning solutions.** Their lungs are not fully developed.

If under 16, youth should not be using power tools and it is questionable whether they should be climbing ladders.

Make sure you know as much as possible about the work the group will be doing and whom you will be working for and with.

Get to know your group and help them get to know each other.

As much as possible, prepare members for what they will be doing.

Distribute and collect forms from a volunteer packet

- Cover letter to the volunteer
- Individual volunteer application
- Participant release of liability
- To be filled out by all participants over 18
- Parental release form – To be filled out if participants are under 18. Some groups are getting these notarized.
- Tool list
- Tools to bring with them
- Do safety training. Go over the proper use of equipment

# Muck and Gut (cont.)

## FIRST STEPS

### PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

If you are volunteering through an organization, this group will usually have designated priorities and assign tasks accordingly.

If not, you will need to make choices about whom you will serve, in what order, and the extent of your assistance. There are likely to be many people who need and/or request help, and some may be quite adamant that their task is the one that should be done first.

If you are doing the prioritization, consider whether:

- The resident is elderly, disabled, underinsured, a single parent, has health concerns
- The safety or security of the resident or structure is threatened
- Work would stop or slow down further damage to the structure
- The resident has family support that can be relied upon
- If assisted, the resident could go out and assist others.

Sometimes residents will insist that you should help someone else first, while you may judge them to be a top priority.

## SAFETY CHECK

### LOOK BEFORE YOU START!

- Scope out structural integrity. Is it safe enough to enter?
- Is the power on, and, if so, should it be?
- If the power is on, look for any electrical issues that need to be addressed before volunteers begin their work
- When removing drywall, studs, trim and other items, be careful that electrical lines are not torn loose in the process
- Are there any gas leaks? If you smell gas, evacuate and call the appropriate authorities

- Is the gas still turned on?
- If so, has the gas been checked and approved by a professional to be operational?

### IDENTIFY OTHER SAFETY HAZARDS

Identify hazards before you start and as you proceed. Alert site supervisor and co-workers to any hazards noted, including, but not limited to:

- Rodents and rodent feces
- Mold
- Lead
- Asbestos
- Sewage
- Bacteria or viruses – known and unknown types
- Gases or vapors – carbon monoxide
- Contaminants in the water and air of a damaged home may include some or all of the above.

## WEAR PROPER PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

If you are a leader, use protective equipment properly yourself and insist that others do the same.

If you are a worker, faithfully follow instructions.

- Protective suits, including hoods and booties
- Gloves (work and rubber/vinyl)
- Safety glasses and shields
- Sturdy foot wear (work or rubber boots) No open toed shoes or flip flops anywhere on site!
- Dust masks (fiber filled)
- Respirators

## Muck and Gut (cont.)

### VENTILATE AS YOU WORK

- Wear safety equipment, including a respirator, when gutting a home.
- Air flow is important.
- Using a fan or several fans blowing out of doors and windows can help move airborne particles out of the home, but should not be used before rodent feces have been addressed.
- Operating air conditioning or furnace for comfort is not recommended since the cold air return will move particles into the HVAC and will spread any mold spores.

### ASSESS FOR RODENTS AND RODENT FECES

Rodents and rodent feces can contain a variety of viruses which can cause very serious infections in humans. Infection can occur by:

- Breathing in dust that is contaminated with rodent urine or droppings
- Direct contact with rodents or their urine and droppings
- Bite wounds, although this does not happen frequently

The hazards presented by rodents and their feces need to be addressed early in the process. Before doing any cleaning, live rodents need to be eliminated and entryways sealed. Trapping should continue until no rodents have been captured for at least 5 days. (This will lower the risk that urine, droppings or nesting material are infectious.) Then follow directions below for cleaning up dead rodents and rodent feces.

### ASSESS FOR DAMAGE CAUSED BY TERMITES

There are times when you may encounter active termites in the home. Active termites must be taken care of before you touch the property, normally by professionals.

- Notify someone of your findings: the organization that is supporting the response, the homeowner's disaster case manager, the homeowner

### ASSESS FOR MOLD:

There are thousands of species of fungus. We deal with about 80 different species in the world of household mold.

- *Stachybotrys (stacky-bot-tress)* or "black mold" is the most widely used name for identifying a dangerous health hazard. It looks oily and causes respiratory problems.
- In reality, there are many more that are just as toxic.
- Mold discolors anything it grows on.
- It may appear fuzzy or dusty, which is, in all reality, mold spores.
- It can be any color.
- Surface mold can be an indicator of a deeper problem.

### WHERE AND HOW MOLD GROWS:

Mold needs a few things to develop and grow:

- **Moisture:** Can be caused by leaky plumbing, minor or major flooding, even humidity
- **Food:** Material to grow on such as wood, paper, cotton, leather, food, insulation and other material.
- **The right temperature:** Above freezing and below 120 degrees. Between 70 and 90 degrees is perfect for mold growth.
- Freezing does not kill mold spores, they just go dormant
- Drywall and insulation behind cabinets needs to be checked.

*See the next page for cleaning procedures for mold.*

# Muck and Gut (cont.)

## CREATE A PERSON CLEAN-UP STATION

This station should include:

- A supply of water including a clean water rinse. Sometimes a sprayer will work well.
- Soap and disinfectant, trash container
- Abrasive sponges and scrub brushes
- Paper towels, First Aid kit, including eye wash

## SET UP A BREAK AREA

Sometimes it is good to include a break area. In hot weather this would be a place out of the sun to cool off and enjoy a breeze if “mother nature” will cooperate.

Break areas can include:

- Soap, disinfectant, water and paper towels for hand-washing
- Places to sit and relax
- Coolers for food, lunch and snacks
- Coolers for drinks, including plenty of water

## DECISIONS

WHAT IS TRASH?

- When removing debris from a home, some items may appear to be trash or junk.
- Be very respectful when you talk about what you are removing, especially when a survivor or the homeowner is present. What you are taking out has been a part, sometimes a very important part, of someone's life.
- Carefully separate personal items so that the homeowner can sort through them to determine what they should do with them.
- This day may not be the time that the homeowner can part with certain items.

## MATERIALS THAT CAN BE SAVED

- Dimensional lumber; 2x4s, 2x6s, etc.
- Solid core doors and solid jams
- Wood or aluminum windows
- Some windows have vinyl wrapped over pressboard and should be inspected closely
- There is no need to remove the window jam
- Some paneling may be made of wood
- Solid wood cabinets
- Drywall and insulation behind the cabinets will need to be looked at for mold growth
- Wood door, window and floor trim
- Some solid styrofoam insulation may be able to be saved

MATERIALS TO BE DISCARDED, PARTICULARLY IF THEY GOT WET OR WERE SUBJECT TO MOLD, ETC.

- Drywall
- Paneling made of pressboard
- Insulation
- Pressboard; cabinets, furniture, sub-flooring, flooring, paneling, pressboard shelving
- Hollow core doors
- Material that will absorb water

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS TO DISCARD, PARTICULARLY IF THEY GOT WET OR WERE SUBJECT TO MOLD, ETC.

- Cloth – thick or quilted material
- Lightweight cloth that cannot be washed and bleached
- Carpet and pad
- Mattresses, pillows, stuffed couches and chairs
- Food

## Muck and Gut (cont.)

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS TO DISCARD, PARTICULARLY IF THEY GOT WET OR WERE SUBJECT TO MOLD, ETC. (cont.)

- Appliances – depending on what kind of water penetrated them and how much. If the water got into the motor, throw it out, or at least have it professionally checked
- Furnaces – same as appliances
- Books, magazines, paper goods
- Stuffed animals

### GENERAL CLEANING PROCEDURES

#### CLEANING SOLUTIONS

Recommendations from the Center for Disease Control, particularly when addressing rodent feces and/or mold:

- A mixture of bleach and water (1 part bleach to 9 parts water = 10 percent bleach) This equals approximately 1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water.
- Bleach does not just bleach things or kill mold, it is a good cleaning agent in general.
- More bleach is not better.
- Excess bleach may cause respiratory difficulties.
- Bleach will cause corrosion to:
  - Receptacles and wiring
  - Nails and screws
  - Metal straps, clips, anchors, etc.
- If using a bleach solution, rinse these well.

Shockwave is a good product for treating mold, but it is very expensive. If using a cleaning product other than bleach and water, follow directions on that product.

### CLEANING UP DEAD RODENTS AND RODENT FECES

- Be sure that live rodents have been eliminated.
- Ventilation prior to cleaning should be for at least 30 minutes before workers enter, but should not be done by using fans.
- Do not stir up dust by sweeping or vacuuming up droppings, urine, or nesting materials.
- Wear rubber, latex or vinyl gloves. A dust mask may provide some protection against dust, molds and insulation fibers, but does not protect against viruses.
- If a dead rodent or nest is present, spray it and the surrounding area with a disinfectant or a mixture of bleach and water (1 part bleach: 9 parts water), soak it in solution for 5 minutes before wiping up with a paper towel or disposable rag.
- Place the dead rodent or nesting materials in a plastic bag and seal tightly. Place the full bag in a second plastic bag and seal.
- Urine and droppings should first be sprayed with a solution of bleach and water (1 part bleach: 9 parts water) and allowed to soak for 5 minutes or sprayed with a disinfectant and allowed to stand according to directions on package.
- Use paper towels to pick up urine and droppings and dispose in the garbage.
- Dispose of sealed bags or paper towels or rags in a covered trash can that is regularly emptied.
- After the rodents, nests, droppings and urine have been removed, disinfect items that might have been contaminated by rodents or their urine and droppings.
- Dispose of any cardboard boxes contaminated with urine or droppings. Plastic, glass, or metal containers can be disinfected by spraying with the bleach and water solution or disinfectant.
- Mop floors and clean countertops with disinfectant or bleach solution.

## Muck and Gut (cont.)

### **CLEANING UP DEAD RODENTS AND RODENT FECES (cont.)**

- Steam clean or shampoo upholstered furniture and carpets with evidence of rodent exposure.
- Wash any bedding and clothing with laundry detergent in hot water if exposed to rodent urine or droppings.
- Lastly, decontaminate and remove gloves, and thoroughly wash hands with soap and water. A waterless alcohol-based hand rub can be used when soap is not available and hands are not visibly soiled).

*For more information consult the Center for Disease Control.*

### **CLEANING PROCESS FOR MOLD**

- The most commonly used sprayers apply solution with low pressure. Power washers often apply the solution with too much pressure.
- Apply the bleach and water solution to the area that needs to be cleaned
- Physically scrub the area with a brush
- Rinse the area with water
- If you are cleaning an item that can be set outside in the sun, do so, otherwise dry thoroughly
- If you are cleaning an area, the area must be thoroughly dry before repairs continue

### **DRYING TIME AND MOISTURE DETECTION**

- Before reinstalling insulation and drywall it is essential that the area be sufficiently dry, or mold will reoccur
- Moisture meters are recommended to use when testing the moisture levels
- A moisture meter is only as good as the one who is reading it

- A moisture meter has several settings that test the moisture in:
  - Insulation
  - Concrete
  - Drywall
  - Wood
  - Other items
- The moisture reading should be 12 percent to 14 percent.

### **DRYING EQUIPMENT that may help speed the process**

- Fans
- Dehumidifiers
- Heaters

### **REMOVING MATERIAL**

Sometimes damage to a building was pre-existing, but still needs to be addressed in order to render the structure safe, sanitary, secure and functional. For example, a leaky roof needs to be fixed before replacing the drywall beneath it.

### **HOW WILL YOU SECURE THE HOME?**

- When taking out windows and doors, it is best to secure the home from the inside leaving at least one secure (i.e., lockable) door.
- Obviously any security system in place will not work.

### **APPLIANCES**

- Use a dolly whenever possible.
- Take off any doors on an appliance before putting it out in the debris or tape shut with duct tape. This will avoid having children get trapped inside.

# Muck and Gut (cont.)

## DRYWALL

Moldy drywall cannot be cleaned. Removing it the right way is important.

- Remove the drywall 1-2 feet above the visible mold line or water mark
- Cut the drywall 2, 4, or 6 feet in order to use 4 x 8 replacement sheets wisely. (e.g., – if an area is damaged up to three feet, cut away 4 feet so that you can easily fit a piece of a 4' x 8' sheet in place.)
- Preferably, cut with a utility knife and pull the drywall off rather than use a sledge hammer. This will create less dust which holds mold spores.

## CEILINGS

- Always check the attic before you start
- Do not stand under the material that you are removing. There may be other things hidden on top of the ceiling such as:
  - Blown-in insulation
  - Old lumber and nails
  - Pans full of water (a temporary fix for a water leak)
  - Concrete or mortar, especially near chimneys

## DOORS

- Take out only what is necessary
- Solid wood door jambs and doors are salvageable
- Solid wood trim can also be reused
- Hollow core doors cannot be properly cleaned

## WINDOWS

Windows that must be removed should be handled carefully to avoid injury from broken glass

Window jambs are usually made of solid wood and can be salvaged

New windows may fit into the same jam

Solid wood windows can be repaired, sometimes more easily than replacing them

## CARPET

Flood-damaged carpet and pad should be removed and thrown away

Some have tried to clean or have the carpets cleaned for the purpose of reinstalling it

Cleaning will shrink and tear down the integrity of the carpet. This will not allow it to be re-installed properly.

## CERAMIC TILE

Ceramic tiles contain lead. This is not a problem unless you drill, etc., and the dust becomes airborne.

## ELECTRICAL MATERIALS

- Always confirm whether or not the electric wire and boxes need to be removed
- Have someone on site who knows electric oversee the removal
- Consider leaving the boxes, including the panel box, to help locate where the electric was run. If this is not possible, mark where these were.

## PLUMBING

- Often plumbing can be reused without tearing it out. Always confirm whether or not the plumbing needs to be removed.

# Muck and Gut (cont.)

## PLUMBING (cont.)

- Have someone on site who knows plumbing oversee the removal.
- Plug all open drains to stop sewer gas from leaking into the house.
- This will also stop any debris from falling into the drains and causing additional plumbing problems.

## DUCTWORK

- Don't remove ducts unless you know it needs to be done.
- Some types, if they are smooth, can be saved and cleaned without removing. (e.g., metal ducts)
- Rippled or flexible duct work must be removed.

## H/VAC –

- Don't risk injury by "giving it a shot." Often these words mean that someone is not sure they can do this work.
- These units, especially if elevated, can be extremely heavy and hard to handle.
- If you are not familiar with HVAC you should leave it for a professional.
- Often there are chemicals in these units that have to be handled professionally.

## DAMAGES CAUSED BY ROT

You may encounter rotting wood in a home that you are gutting.

- Rot will have to be dealt with in due time.
- When addressing rotted wood you must know what the result will be if you remove it.
- Does removing something weaken the structure that you are working under or is it safer to leave it in place for now?

## TREES

The operator of any equipment should be well-trained

- Do not disable anything
- Use all of the safety equipment, including:
  - Gloves
  - Eye wear
  - Ear protection
- Do a maintenance check of equipment before every use and when finished
- Don't cut alone
- Always be aware of your surroundings
- Watch for kick-back
- Cut limbs evenly. (Don't trim all the limbs off one side and leave the rest. The tree may become too heavy on the other side and fall over. Don't leave jagged edges when you trim.)
- Always leave equipment clean and in working order when finished.

## TARPING ROOFS

In many cases the whole roof is not completely damaged or destroyed so why tarp the whole thing?

- It is better to tarp or patch only the area that is damaged or leaking. Otherwise you will create more damage by attaching wood strips to hold down the tarping material.
- All you need to do is remember that water runs downhill.
- Some lamar billboard material is stronger against UV rays than the blue tarps.

# Muck and Gut (cont.)

## DEALING WITH THE DEBRIS AND TRASH

Whether the disaster is federally declared or not, it is important to know how to sort and where to place it.

- If the debris is not sorted properly or placed in the wrong spot it could cause the homeowner to pay fines until it is removed or relocated.
- Obtain information about sorting and placement is available from the city or county you are responding in.

## SORTING

Debris may need to be sorted into six different piles. Find out what is expected where you are working.

### PILE #1 – HOUSEHOLD GARBAGE

- Bagged trash
- Discarded food
- Packaging and paper goods

### PILE #2 – CONSTRUCTION DEBRIS

- Building materials
- Drywall
- Lumber
- Carpet
- Furniture
- Mattresses
- Plumbing

### PILE #3 – VEGETATION DEBRIS

- Tree branches
- Leaves
- Logs

### PILE #4 – HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

- Oil
- Batteries
- Pesticides
- Paints
- Cleaning supplies
- Compressed gas

### PILE #5 – WHITE GOODS

- Refrigerators
- Washers and dryers
- Freezers
- Air conditioners
- Stoves
- Water heaters
- Dishwashers

### PILE #6 – ELECTRONICS

- Televisions
- Computers
- Radios
- Stereos
- DVD players
- Telephones

## Muck and Gut (cont.)

**DEBRIS PLACEMENT** *(Historically – Check to make sure this is true for the event to which you are responding.)*

- If FEMA is involved, they will normally pick up debris at the curb (between the street and sidewalk)
- This may be the case for a short period of time after the declared event. There will be a deadline for this service.
- FEMA generally does not pick up debris off of private property
- After the FEMA deadline or in an undeclared disaster, debris should be placed on the property behind the sidewalk toward the house, or next to the road with ample room for traffic to pass without danger of running over the material.

Never pile debris in the ditch as this can cause the natural flow of water to be altered and could cause more damage.

### WHEN THE DAY IS DONE

#### CLEANUP

- Leave the job site clean and in order.
- It may still be a disaster area, but we can bring order out of the chaos.
- Clean the tools and return them to their owners.
- Remove protective suits. Clean yourselves as best you can. If possible, change out of your dirty clothes or put some kind of covers over the seats and floor in order to avoid contaminating your vehicle.
- Don't forget to say good-bye to the homeowner and listen to them. It is part of their healing.
- Leave the gift of help and hope.

### DEBRIEF

#### DISCUSS EVENTS OF THE DAY

- You have seen and heard things that could be disturbing, especially to young minds or people who have never been exposed to disaster before.
- This gives the opportunity to discuss the successes and life changes that have been experienced.
- It allows members to see how the team is working together.
- It allows members to ask questions, to consider where God is in the midst of disaster and to witness to where they have seen God at work.

*Compiled December 2013 from materials provided by Lutheran, United Methodist, United Church of Christ, Presbyterian and Baptist members of the Interfaith Partnership for Disaster Response in Eastern Pennsylvania*



# Disaster Recovery Volunteer Orientation Packet

A STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDINGS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE IN DISASTER RESPONSE

*As volunteers in disaster response we are privileged to have the opportunity to serve our great God through our labor. Our primary purpose is to radiate the love of Jesus Christ to all around us while demonstrating God's continued caring presence to those whose lives have been impacted by disaster. We invest ourselves in this mission and seek to honor God in all we do.*

*We understand that since we will be working together with many varied persons and conditions, cooperation is key to the success of our efforts. We will do our best to be flexible, adaptable, sensitive and patient. While we are eager to get things done and make the best use of everyone's time, we accept the fact that things don't always happen as smoothly or as quickly as we would like. When faced with a delay or difficult situation, we will attempt to make the best of it, find a solution, maintain a positive attitude, discover the humor, and help someone smile.*

*We know there will be many challenging jobs to do. However, we also know that safety is paramount. Therefore we will only attempt labor that matches our skills and experience and that we feel safe and comfortable to do. If we would like to learn a new skill, we will ask a skilled and experienced person to teach and guide us until we are adept.*

*Volunteers and other staff agree to follow the directives of staff entrusted with supervising the site on which we are working. We understand that the site supervisor will be doing his or her best to honor the needs and desires of the owner*

*while working within the resources and guidelines of the relief organization.*

## INTERACTION WITH SURVIVORS

The goal of disaster work teams is to get residents back into safe, sanitary, secure and functional housing. The way you interact with survivors also has a major impact on their recovery.

Remember that you are working on someone's home. Listening to survivors and showing respect, care and concern are very important ways you can help them heal.

- If a survivor wants to talk, having one person listen while the others work can help the group accomplish the manual labor.
- Accept the feelings that are expressed. Do not try to change them, though you can express hope even if the survivor does not.
- Don't say that everything will turn out all right, because it might not. On the other hand, you can express confidence that a new normal will emerge.
- Be particularly sensitive when talking about items which need to be disposed of. While they may appear like trash to you, they may have been prized or hold sentimental value for the homeowner.
- While appropriate joking, laughter and singing can help lift spirits, do not engage in horseplay since it can endanger people and the work project.
- Share your concerns, feelings and reactions with your group leader or site supervisor at an appropriate time, especially anything that might trouble you.

# Disaster Recovery Volunteer Orientation Packet (cont.)

## PERSONAL CHECKLIST FOR VOLUNTEERS

As a volunteer you are expected to be essentially self-sufficient. Unless other arrangements are specified, you will be expected to provide your own tools and your own meals and transportation. Please clarify with your team leader, the volunteer coordinator or the site supervisor what equipment will be needed for the project and what, if anything, will be provided on site.

**Since each individual trip is unique, there is no one checklist that will fit each experience. However, some items will be needed on nearly every trip, including:**

- Current Tetanus shot (five years or less)
- Hepatitis shots are recommended if working in a highly contaminated area. These are given in a series of two or three shots and it will take several months to get a complete series
- Liability/Medical releases
- Old work clothes (long pants and long-sleeved shirt advised)
- Sturdy, close-toed shoes, heavy work boots if possible. (Nails are always where you don't expect them.) Open-toed shoes and flip flops will not be allowed.
- Boots for work in mud
- Hat/bandanna/sweatband
- Heavy duty work gloves
- Rubber, vinyl or waterproof gloves
- Safety goggles
- Respirators: N-95 disposable dust face masks (Use for sanding, insulating, scraping paint). Type N-95 is recommended against most molds, but does not protect from disinfectant vapors. If working where molds may be present, you must use a mold respirator.
- Personal First Aid supplies
- Sun block and sunglasses
- Insect repellent (DEET 40 percent or better recommended)
- Gel sanitizer and paper towels (Do not use sanitizer near open flame or while smoking)
- Snacks/lunch (Do not eat before sanitizing hands)
- Water bottles/jugs/cooler
- Clean clothes, shampoo and soap in case you need to and are able to change and even wash up when work is completed. You will not want to contaminate the vehicle or your home when you return.
- A bag for dirty clothes
- A bag for dirty tools and equipment in case you cannot clean them adequately on site.

## PERSONAL TOOL LIST

- Utility knife
- Tape measure
- Hammer
- Straight screwdriver
- Philips screwdriver

## OTHER USEFUL ITEMS INCLUDE:

- Crow bars
- Nail pullers/ cat's paw
- Brooms and shovels
- Rakes
- Wheel barrels

# Disaster Recovery Volunteer Orientation Packet (cont.)

OTHER USEFUL ITEMS INCLUDE (cont.):

- Ladders
- Screw drivers
- Pliers and wire cutters
- Hand saws
- Wrenches
- Safety equipment including Tyvek suits
- Battery drills\*
- Power saws\*
- Reciprocal saws\*

\* *Those items with an asterisk are only to be used by adults who have been trained and are skilled.* Remember, you are responsible for the safe use of any tool you bring, even if someone else uses it. Make sure your tools are in good shape and be careful to whom you lend things.

Check with your group leader before bringing extra, especially bulky, tools to make sure they might be needed and that there will be room to take them.

## ON-SITE GUIDELINES

HOW OLD MUST YOU BE TO WORK ON-SITE?

- You must be 16 years of age or older to work on a site. If you are between the ages of 16 and 18 you must have a signed parental release. Sixteen and 17-year-olds or those still in high school are to be supervised by one adult to every four youth.

WHAT DO I WEAR TO WORK?

- Long-sleeved shirts, long pants and work gloves. Close-toed shoes are required. Work boots are preferred. Open-toed shoes will not be allowed.
- Keep jewelry to minimum, it can get entangled in equipment and cause injury.

- If you will be addressing mold or working in a contaminated area, wear goggles and a protective suit (Tyvek or equivalent) including hat and booties.

WHO IS IN CHARGE AT THE WORKSITE?

- There should be a designated site supervisor for each site who will know what is to happen there and be responsible for the smooth operation of the project. Make sure you know who this person is and follow his or her directions.
- There is no such thing as a dumb question. If you don't know or understand how or what to do next, ask. Refer all questions, suggestions, concerns or changes to the site supervisor. Do not change anything unless the supervisor clears it.
- Site supervisors will set a high standard for work. Do the very best you can, remembering that you are working on someone's home. Please don't be offended if the site supervisor asks you to do something over or in a different manner.
- If a site supervisor or group leader judges that your functioning might be impaired in any manner, whether from fatigue, hunger, illness, consumption of a substance, etc., you will not be allowed to work. This is for your own safety as well as the safety of others.

FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS OF THE SITE SUPERVISOR AND THE WORK PLAN.

These have been carefully developed with the homeowner's desires in mind.

Do not remove more than you have been instructed to do. For example, solid wooden door or window jams may be salvageable.

Do not provide major "extras" for the homeowner, even if you are going to pay for them. A pot of flowers is a nice gesture. Building a shed that wasn't specified may present problems with others who don't receive such things from the volunteers who work on their properties or with the group organizing work in the area.

# Disaster Recovery Volunteer Orientation Packet (cont.)

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY?  
**BEFORE YOU START WORK, make sure that you know:**

- Where the **first aid kit** is located
- The **address of the site**
- The **phone number for emergency services and directions to the nearest hospital** are readily available
- The location of a **working phone** and that some **means of transportation** are available
- Who has the **forms for each worker listing the emergency contact** and that these are readily available
- Who will make decisions in event of a serious accident

**IN THE EVENT OF A SERIOUS ACCIDENT make sure someone calls 911 and has the injured person transported to the nearest emergency facility. Be sure that the emergency information is sent along with the injured person. Remain calm so that you do not upset the other team members.**

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

- Drink water frequently and in generous quantities.
- Apply sunscreen liberally and frequently if you are working outside, even if it is a cloudy or cold day.
- Do not smoke on any property. If you are a smoker, ask a site manager whether there is a designated area that you may use.
- Do not bring alcohol, drugs or other illegal substances on any site. If you have consumed alcohol or drugs, other than over the counter medication or something prescribed for you, you may not come on-site.
- Keep the workplace cleaned up as much as possible, this will help to prevent accidents.
- Avoid and/or squelch criticism, gossip and rumors. Foul or undesirable language is not permitted.

## SAFETY RULES

### GUIDELINES FOR TOOL USE

- All workers are to be trained in the proper use of hand and power tools. No one is to operate a tool for which he or she has not received instruction.
- Youth under the age of 18 are not to use power tools unless they are trained and under skilled supervision.
- Workers must be 18 or older to operate any air tools (nail guns, power washer or sprayer). The site supervisor may make an exception if a younger person is in the building trade and familiar with their use and a skilled worker will supervise the job.
- Sharp tools are to be carried with the point downward or placed in tool box or belt
- Use the right tool for the job. For instance, do not use a screwdriver as a hammer.
- Do not remove any safety feature from any equipment.

### WORKER SAFETY

- A first aid kit is to be available at each job site.
- Before work is begun, a safety briefing is to be held with the entire work team. This will be repeated each day and whenever a new worker arrives on site, that worker will be briefed on safety.
- Before work begins, make sure someone has checked to see whether the electricity or gas is on and whether it should be.
- If you smell gas, evacuate.
- Safety goggles are to be used when operating power equipment, scraping paint, hitting metal with metal, etc.
- Use N95 dust masks when sanding, scraping paint or installing insulation.
- When working with mold or bleach, make sure the area is well ventilated and use the mold respirator provided by site supervisor. Make sure it fits snugly.

# Disaster Recovery Volunteer Orientation Packet (cont.)

## WORKER SAFETY (cont.)

- When using the bleach solution, do not exceed 10 percent of bleach to water, which equals 1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water. More bleach is not better. It is only more dangerous to your lungs.
- Safety harnesses must be used when working on a roof with 8/12 pitch. (Rises 8" per foot)
- Use hard hats in work where house demolition or overhead work is going on.
- Treat and clean all minor wounds quickly to avoid infection. Always use clean or purified water to wash any parts of the body that have come in contact with surfaces contaminated by flood waters.
- Do not smoke, light matches or get an open flame near hand sanitizer or hands that have been recently cleansed. The sanitizer is highly flammable.
- Pace yourself and take frequent breaks, especially when it is hot.
- Drink plenty of water. Do not drink water from the job site unless you have been told that it is safe.
- Do NOT eat any foods without thoroughly washing your hands or using antibacterial gel.
- Clean tools after use. This not only helps to preserve the tool, but prevents transfer of contamination.

## SITE SAFETY

- Walk and drive cautiously. Debris-filled streets are dangerous. Snakes, rodents and insects may be a hazard. Washouts and floods may weaken road and bridge structures and could collapse under vehicle weight.
- Before entering a building, always check for structural damage. Make sure it is not in danger of collapsing.
- Before permitting workers to enter a building, the site supervisor is to make sure that any outside gas lines of a damaged building are turned off and that the house has aired for several minutes to remove escaping gas.

- When entering a building, do not use open flame as a light source. Use a battery-operated flashlight.
- Be on the lookout for mold, rodent feces, termite damage, sewage, lead and asbestos. Notify your site supervisor if you spot any of these. Special handling may be needed.
- Remove tools, clean and secure job sites at the end of each work day. Lock doors and secure windows.

## DEALING WITH FLOOD DAMAGE

- Be careful entering a flood-damaged building.
- Loose, wet ceiling plaster is heavy and dangerous, knock down hanging plaster before moving around.
- Make sure you are not standing directly under ceiling material which is being removed. Something may be above it.
- Watch for holes in the floor and loose boards with exposed nails.
- Take care to protect open scratches or wounds from contacting contaminated water.
- Raw sewerage and other bacteria in flood waters can cause infections. Wounds should be cleaned thoroughly with soap and water and a tetanus shot may be needed.

***MOST IMPORTANTLY: Always take time to be safe and to watch out for the safety of others!***

# Disaster Recovery Volunteer Orientation Packet (cont.)

## COPING WITH STRESS

A natural disaster not only leaves a trail of property destruction in its wake, many times it leaves thousands of its survivors with a damaged sense of balance. In addition to restoring buildings and replacing material possessions survivors and volunteers may need to devote time to restoring their own emotional equilibrium. This can be especially important for children and young adults who do not have years of life experience to guide them.

## TIPS FOR DEALING WITH STRESS

- Be extra patient.
- Determine what's really important, keeping in mind that your viewpoint of what is important may be different from that of the homeowner.
- Realize that survivors of disaster have suffered multiple losses and that it's natural for them to express disbelief, anger, sadness, anxiety and depression afterward. Realize that the emotions of survivors will roller-coaster and moods can change unexpectedly. Don't try to talk someone out of the emotion they are experiencing. Do affirm that you care. Take time to listen to the survivor's story. Encourage the survivor to reach out for skilled support.
- Don't overlook the feelings of children as you deal with the situation. They need to feel that they can count on you for the extra attention, love and support needed to get through. Reassure them. Help them to understand they are not responsible for the problems others face.
- **Do not overlook your own stress as a volunteer!** Witnessing great need, listening to the pain others experience, wanting to help while feeling limited, and realizing one's own vulnerability all take their toll even on the most experienced disaster worker. Take time to get away from the disaster, to relax and enjoy yourself whether it be with a good book, a walk, or goofing off with some buddies. Talk with God, sharing your frustrations, fears, questions and hopes. Talk with your coworkers. Hang out with someone who makes you laugh. Call home and touch base with those you love. Get enough sleep and make sure you eat well, as in put healthy things into your body.



## Contacts, Partners and Resources

### **ELCA.org**

[ELCA.org/disaster](http://ELCA.org/disaster)

### **MIF.ELCA.org**

A financial ministry of the ELCA

### **Campnoah.org**

Camp Noah is a safe, caring and fun environment with curriculum specifically designed to help children heal by processing their disaster experience. Camps are held in impacted areas using trained volunteers.

### **FEMA RELATED SITES**

#### **FEMA.gov**

The website for FEMA, The Federal Emergency Management Agency. [Fema.gov](http://Fema.gov) contains information on planning, preparing and mitigation; disaster survivor assistance; response and recovery efforts for major disaster.

#### **Ready.gov**

Emergency preparedness guidance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The site lists and explains specific threats and response.

#### **Disasterassistance.gov**

Information on how you might be able to get assistance from the U.S. Government before, during and after a disaster.

### **NATIONAL VOAD AND SELECTED MEMBERS OF NVOAD SITES**

#### **NVOAD.org**

The website of NVOAD (National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster); NVOAD is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that serves as the forum where organizations share knowledge and resources throughout the disaster cycle – preparation, response, recovery and mitigation – to help communities prepare for and recover from disasters. The website includes information on State Voluntary Organizations as well.

#### **Redcross.org**

American Red Cross is a humanitarian organization led by volunteers and guided by its Congressional charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement that provides relief to survivors of disasters and helps people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies.

#### **disaster.salvationarmyusa.org**

The Salvation Army is an international movement and an evangelical part of the universal Christian church. Its disaster program consists of several basic services: food service, shelter, emergency financial assistance to individuals and families through casework specialists, donations management,

emotional and spiritual care, emergency communications, disaster case management, clean-up and reconstruction, and partnerships.

#### **UMCOR.org**

United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), has as its mission to alleviate human suffering, whether caused by war, conflict, or natural disaster, with open hearts and minds to all people. UMCOR responds to natural or civil disasters of such magnitude that they overwhelm a community's ability to recover on its own. UMCOR offers disaster preparedness training, provides essential supplies and care – both physical and psychological – in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, supports long-term rebuilding efforts and assists communities as they adapt.

#### **Churchworldservice.org**

Church World Service has as its mission to provide effective and compassionate response to the physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of individuals and communities affected by natural and human-caused disasters. Church World Service focuses on both immediate emergency assistance and long-term support that helps survivors take ownership of the recovery process.