

Connecting Neighbors Facilitator Notes



Slide 1

TITLE SLIDE: CONNECTING NEIGHBORS: A “Disaster Ready Congregations” Curriculum of the United Methodist Church

Welcome participants. **Affirm** their interest in disaster readiness. Make sure everyone knows where the **restrooms** are located and where they are to go **in the event of an emergency**.

SAY: *The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society...Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located...to cooperate in ministry with other local churches...and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church... (2012 Book of Discipline)*

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SLIDE: INTRODUCTION

To the people of the United Methodist Church and their community partners:

This curriculum is intended for broad use by dedicated volunteers willing and able to facilitate workshops and webinars with the **goal** of inspiring congregations and communities to be better able to minimize disaster-caused harm to people and property and to respond to our neighbors in helpful, cooperative and caring ways on behalf of the church and in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

This curriculum incorporates knowledge and experience gleaned over many years by dedicated volunteers who have served their neighbors on behalf of the church. Rich information has also been included from other organizations and community partners - most notably the American Red Cross, National Disaster Interfaith Network, and FEMA. UMCOR is grateful to these partners for providing public access to helpful resources.

Your partners in disaster ministry,

The United Methodist Committee On Relief

U.S. Disaster Response

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SLIDE: MODULES

SAY: The Connecting Neighbors curriculum consists of an overview of disaster ministry, three units and supporting handouts.

SUMMARIZE AND EXPLAIN which of the following modules that will be reviewed in the time allotted.

The **Disaster Ministry Overview** provides foundational information especially useful for modules 2 and 3.

Objectives: Participants will understand how our United Methodist structure enhances the local church’s capabilities for disaster readiness and response.

Time: Budget about 30-60 minutes for this overview.

Target Audience: Everyone.

Module 1: Ready Congregants focuses on preparing individuals and families to be disaster-ready.

Objectives: Participants will be inspired to take action in order to prepare themselves, their households and others before and immediately following a disaster.

Time: Budget about two hours for this unit.

Target Audience: Everyone.

Module 2: Ready Churches emphasizes the importance of protecting church property and the people within the property, before and immediately following a disaster, and of appropriate use of church property in disaster response.

Objectives: Participants will (1) identify one or more steps to take in order to mitigate against disaster-caused damage to property; (2) identify one or more steps to take in order to prevent harm to people who are present in or on church property when disasters or emergencies occur; and (3) be able to assess the utilization of church property following a disaster within or near the community of the church.

Time: Budget about two hours for this unit.

Target Audience: Everyone, especially church leaders including, but not limited to, pastors, trustees, Sunday school superintendent, lay leader, missions coordinator, treasurer and finance committee members, young adult and youth representatives, and others.

Module 3: Ready Response encourages churches to explore their capacity for various disaster response ministries and to consider ways to engage community partners.

Objectives: Participants will (1) be able to identify at least one disaster ministry their church might be willing and able to implement before and/or after a community disaster; and (2) initiate a preliminary plan to engage the church and to cooperate with other households of faith and the community in order to be prepared to respond in the event of a disaster.

Time: Budget about two hours for this unit.

Target Audience: Everyone interested in disaster-ready congregations and communities, particularly mission and outreach personnel, lay leaders, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, youth ministry leaders, lay servants and Stephen's Ministers!

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SUB-TITLE SLIDE: DISASTER MINISTRY OVERVIEW

SAY: The **Disaster Ministry Overview** provides foundational information, especially useful for modules 2 and 3.

Objectives: Participants will understand how our United Methodist structure enhances the local church's capabilities for disaster readiness and response.

Time: Budget about 30-60 minutes for this overview.

Target Audience: Everyone

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SLIDE: GROUNDED IN MISSION

SAY: We should risk ourselves foolishly for the Gospel; we should not risk ourselves—our children, our frail ones, our church property—to predictable dangers if we believe we are called to make ourselves and our lives available in God’s service.

Our sacred text makes it clear throughout that we belong to God...and that all we have belongs to God. That reality comes colliding with our own materialism when the wind blows, the water rises and the earth shakes. When we see what can be lost...God’s beloved people, the temporal things we’ve built and acquired...we know God shares our grief and pain. God stays with us through the rebuilding of lives and property. We bring to these events the painful resurrection process that is in our DNA, and we promise that this loss will never happen again, that we will never be so unprepared again.

What if...?

What if America’s greatest asset—its faith-motivated and God-centered people—rose up to embrace the belief that protecting people, places and ministry is our responsibility? What if we saw preparation and planning to be equal partners with building projects and new fellowship halls? What if we understood that stewardship of our bodies (eating healthy foods and exercising) and stewardship of our gifts (teaching, praying, tithing) are twin pillars supporting stewardship of our church family and church home to become the best gifts we have to give to our communities when trouble comes?

If we were to embrace stewardship of our church family and church property in advance of emergencies, we might be the engineers of new beginnings in our communities, the source of hope for ourselves, and the visible evidence of our commitment to being the hands and feet of God’s ministry on Earth.

We have no choice but to set aside our personal agenda and embrace inconvenience in order to offer care, always at some cost and risk. All of us, laity and clergy alike, are God’s designated caregivers, urged by Jesus “to do likewise.”

This curriculum is designed to empower United Methodists (and households of faith with whom we intentionally coordinate) to inspire our congregations to prepare for and respond to disasters.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) counts on the people called United Methodist to be engaged in disaster readiness and response so that our own communities are strengthened, made more resilient, and more connected through our shared commitment to Be There and to Be Hope.

ASK: Why is the church called to be in disaster ministry?

ACTIVITY: Read the following scripture OR suggest alternate scriptures that give us an understanding of God’s missional directive to send our faith families into the world in disaster response.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Hebrews 10: 23-24

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Hebrews 11: 1

SUMMARIZE: United Methodist churches understand, in a foundational way, that our mission is to be the transformation the world needs. Our calling leads us to enter into

disaster response as followers of Christ who earnestly seek to live our faith in ways that can transform communities...and the lives of those who are our neighbors. We must continually strive to become better than we are. That's done by building competent local strength; by attracting, training and managing our volunteers better; by preparing our families, churches and communities to be better prepared for disaster; by being true to our collective mission.

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SLIDE: UNDERGIRD BY FAITH

SAY: Our work is based on our faith in God and respect for the communities we serve. This gives us the courage to serve boldly as the presence of Christ to alleviate human suffering and advance hope and healing. If we are inspired by our mission as to *why* we do what we do, our values provide the guidance we need for *how* we do what we do.

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SLIDE: GUIDED BY VALUES

SAY: Our faith beliefs are strongly articulated in the Wesleyan United Methodist values. We see our neighbors as God see them, worthy of love and honored as partners. We appreciate working with others who care about helping neighbors and respect their beliefs as well.

Facilitator suggestion: Print copies of the Global Ministries values for each participant (in appendix).

HANDOUT: Values

- Provide practical, proactive support to the most vulnerable survivors of chronic or momentary emergencies stemming from natural or civil causes.
- Honor cultural differences. We deliver aid to people without regard to race, religion, politics, gender or sexual orientation. We seek input from local communities in identifying needs and developing innovative solutions.
- All people have God-given dignity and worth. The most essential partner in our work is the beneficiary.
- Work with local partners. Our Methodist family, the United Methodist Connection, civic organizations, faith communities, school leaders and other local resources are great assets to sustainable recovery and development, particularly after massive traumatic events.
- Be a good steward of donated resources.
- We do not tie the promise of its relief and development activity to any religious or political viewpoint.
- We incorporate best practices and standards to provide innovative, effective and integrated ministry.
- We welcome the good efforts of countless individuals and churches who support us through gifts, prayers and service.

ACTIVITY: Participants are invited to review and discuss the handout about values.

ASK: Which of these matter the most to you? Which of these challenges your views? Where have you seen these lived out? Where have we, as a community of faith, seen these values fail?

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SLIDE: National VOAD Points of Consensus

SAY: An important aspect of our connectedness includes partnering with others. The United Methodist Church, through The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), is a member of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. National VOAD (as well as each state VOAD) is a collaborative of organizations whose aim is to coordinate their work in the spirit of cooperation.

We have developed standards by which we can comfortably work together; providing guidance for activities such as emotional and spiritual care, case management, repair/rebuild, and volunteer coordination. These “Points of Consensus” are informed by our shared compassion for survivors, while remaining respectful of each member organization’s mission and values. They are consistent with our United Methodist mission to be a transformative presence of Jesus Christ in a hurting world.

ACTIVITY: Hand out the *National VOAD Points of Consensus for Spiritual Care* (found in the appendix).

ASK: When you look at these, what appeals to you the most? Where do you see an intersection of these Points of Consensus and values that we just looked at?

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SLIDE: STAY MISSION-FOCUSED

SUMMARIZE: It is important to be focused solidly on our mission. This way, when we find ourselves confronting others’ priorities about whom, how or why we help, we can stay committed to our goal.

ASK: What REALLY matters? Our mission: to help people, with respect for their faith, culture and values; to work with others uncritically in full recognition of their shared desire to help others; to be a positive presence of God’s love for all of God’s creation; to act with humility, justice and peace to interrupt the cycle of hurt and the pain of loss. United Methodist values, implicit within the National VOAD Points of Consensus, help to remind us of *who* we are, and *Whose* we are.

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SLIDE: SUPPORTED BY OUR CONNECTIONS

SAY: So, who are we? As United Methodists, we are part of what we refer to as “a connectional system.” United Methodist churches gain strength from their connection to a global denomination. Each church – regardless of how large or small the congregation - has so much to give, so much to learn, so much strength, so much love to make our jagged pieces into interlaced wholes. A “ready congregation” understands that it is at the center of many layers of support and empowered to do mighty disaster response because the

support team encircles it with support and resources. Y(our) church is able to play a role in disaster preparation, supported by these connections.

ASK: Do you know the name of your district, conference and jurisdiction? How does the United Methodist structure—the Connectional System—benefit your disaster ministry? Do you know the name(s) of your district or conference disaster response leaders? Volunteer coordinators? Are there challenges in our “connectedness” that may become barriers to effective disaster ministry? If you are from another faith tradition, how do you connect your ministry to other groups with whom you relate?

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SLIDE: UMCOR: YOUR PARTNER IN DISASTER MINISTRY

SAY: As an agency of the United Methodist Church, the U.S. Disaster Response unit of UMCOR (which is part of Global Ministries) is mandated by the Book of Discipline to provide support to the annual conference to partner in disaster ministry *when invited*. UMCOR primarily does this by offering training, expertise, relief supplies and funding. The conference, in turn, supports the districts and churches in their efforts. It is the people of the church – the volunteers, leadership and others – who embody “UMCOR” and who earn the trust of survivors, donors and partners.

REFERENCE: Refer to the excerpt from the Book of Discipline located in the appendix.

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SLIDE: SOURCES OF UMCOR FUNDING

SAY: Annual conferences often reach out to UMCOR for grants to support disaster ministries. UMCOR’s funding comes entirely from “second-mile giving.”

One Great Hour of Sharing

UMCOR only exists because of the generosity and compassion of givers. A special [One Great Hour of Sharing offering](#) makes it possible for UMCOR to use 100% of all other contributions on the projects our donors specify, instead of on administrative or fundraising costs. Donations UMCOR receives through this offering, along with other undesignated gifts, cover the cost of “keeping the lights on.”

The Advance

When you hear about a disaster or humanitarian crisis and you give to UMCOR out of a sense of love and compassion, 100% of the money you designate goes toward people in need. The Advance is an accountable, designated giving arm of The United Methodist Church that **ensures 100% of each gift is used for its intended mission or ministry**. See more at: <http://www.umcor.org/Search-for-Projects/Search-for-Projects>

Giving Tuesday

The Advance participates in UMC #GivingTuesday, part of a larger international movement that provides an alternative to Black Friday, Local Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday — the shopping traditions following Thanksgiving.

UMCOR does not receive United Methodist World Service or apportionment funds.

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SLIDE: OUR STRUCTURE IS OUR STRENGTH

Our mission is to show Jesus Christ to the world, and let us pray that our structures do the same. - Thomas Kemper, General Secretary, General Board of Global Ministries.

PHOTO: Greater New Jersey Conference, Hurricane Sandy response. Present are the pastor, local volunteers, Bishop, District Superintendent, and UMCOR AGS.

SUMMARIZE: The structure of the United Methodist Church is a significant strength. It also, admittedly, poses some challenges. This is the nature of human constructs. Ultimately, though, the effectiveness of the structure is dependent upon healthy relationships between people – people who are generous with their love, compassion, time, talent and resources. The connections we have should strengthen the role of the church to be in mission and ministry in all aspects of our discipleship, including disaster ministry.

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SLIDE: PHASES OF DISASTER

SAY: Our church has a role in all phases of disaster. Therefore, we need to understand just a bit about those phases so that we can then respond creatively to mission opportunities.

We view the phases of disaster as the “5 Rs”: readiness, rescue, relief, recovery, and review.

SAY: We should always be in **readiness phase**, but people are more likely to take steps to be prepared AFTER they experience a disaster. Being prepared involves planning how to respond when an emergency or disaster occurs and working to marshal the resources to respond effectively. These activities help save lives and minimize damage by preparing people to keep themselves and their families safe and secure when an emergency is imminent or when it hits and becomes a disaster. Planning by communities, emergency management, large employers and emergency personnel is vital.

ASK: How would planning at the local church level unleash our faith community to be ready?

SAY: Rescue is the phase that covers the period during and immediately following a disaster. During this phase, emergency personnel manage response in order to protect people, pets, property and livestock. It is also likely that neighbors are helping neighbors. It is important that well-meaning volunteers find ways to be helpful without impeding the work of authorized first responders. However, even in the rescue phase, the church has responsibility as part of a disaster-affected community.

ASK: In the rescue phase, how could a local community of faith play a role? (As a neighbor, a spiritual support, a sanctuary—a place of refuge?)

SAY: Relief immediately follows (and often overlaps) the rescue/emergency phase. Responders continue to work to bring infrastructure – utilities, transportation and government services – back online. When it is safe, neighbors and relief organizations reach out to address basic human needs – food, water, shelter. Evacuated residents may be allowed to return home at this time or may still be in temporary housing/shelters if homes are significantly damaged. During the relief phase, work is also done to help “mitigate” (to minimize or prevent) any further damage from occurring.

Trained volunteers – Early Response Teams and others – may secure residences from additional damage by helping to tarp roofs, cleaning up and drying out water-damaged homes, and removing debris. Local churches might open their doors and/or reach out to their neighbors to provide a caring presence and a place of “sanctuary.” They may offer temporary housing, food, pet care, childcare, etc. The church could share their electricity, communications equipment, or meeting space. Churches also may need to assess church property damage and relay that information to conference personnel, who are also actively involved in assessing the scope of church and community damage and related needs.

Church leaders must do all they can to legitimize their involvement in the overall disaster response. The most effective way that happens is with a “presence” from the beginning of the relief phase.

This is a very intense and chaotic time for everyone involved. Well-meaning helpers may become easily frustrated with the lack of coordination. There may be too many leaders, or too few. Patience may wear thin at times. Additional harm most often happens as helpers rush to do home repairs. They frequently carry the work too far, too soon. Untrained volunteers don’t understand the law, insurance assessment procedures, or how certain hasty repairs can jeopardize a survivor’s health (such as when flood damage is covered over before interior segments of walls and floors dry completely). Without training, well-intentioned volunteers can imperil a survivor’s health and eligibility for financial assistance from insurance and the government.

ASK: What could your church do to lessen the community’s anxiety during this difficult time when there is no semblance of order or clear understanding of next steps?

SAY: As relief activities continue, the transition to **recovery** begins. Relief is quick-paced; its work is on a broad scale, providing only a temporary “fix” for as many survivors as possible. Recovery’s creative, thorough, deliberate pace has its eye on addressing disaster-recovery needs of individuals, one individual or household at a time. Its client-centered approach is more detailed, intentional, and long-term than anything found in relief. Information gained in relief passes to those committing to providing disaster recovery resources.

There is no definitive point when relief stops and recovery starts. This transition from relief to recovery is not easy; it can be a confusing time during which church leaders – conference, district and local church – work together to determine how and where to provide long-term assistance. Because community-wide disasters often overwhelm the community’s existing capacity to recover, they may become increasingly aware of their need to work together to rally local, county, state, and national partners.

These partnerships often coalesce into long-term recovery groups. These collaborative groups – often referred to as “LTRGs” – ideally play to the strengths of each organization, agency, business, and government partner so that limited resources can be stretched to the fullest. LTRGs also work together to avoid duplication of effort or resources.

SAY: Taking the time to **review** is important. An **after-action review** might be especially helpful as relief phase transitions to recovery. We would ask ourselves, what did we do in response that was particularly helpful? What actions or activities would we like to replicate in a future event? There should be opportunities in recovery phase as well to periodically assess and adjust accordingly. As recovery winds down, it’s especially helpful to take time

for review and to celebrate accomplishments. Participating agencies will come together and discuss what worked well and what did not. From these discussions and the relationships forged over time, there is usually a recommendation to the community on ways to improve the response for the next event. These “best practices” and “lessons learned” inform the continued **readiness** activities and bring us full circle.

ASK: Is it possible for the local church to provide disaster ministries in every stage? How do these 5 stages provide opportunities for any United Methodist church to be in ministry? How might the church be changed by their involvement in disaster ministries?

SAY: Modules 1, 2, and 3 each explore additional activities in more detail.

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SLIDE: RECOVERY FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCES

SAY: We often think of “resources” as either money or material goods.

Financial resources allow for flexibility to purchase what is most needed on behalf of survivors. Money has to be managed, accounted for, and distributed equitably.

Donated materials such as construction supplies, appliances, and household goods, for example, also have to be managed – to be purchased, stored and/or transported to the work site.

SAY: While “cash is king” and donated goods fill many recovery gaps, providing money and materials alone is often not enough to restore the most vulnerable households. Some of the most precious resources in recovery are people – people who provide invaluable services and support directly to the survivors until they reach their recovery goals.

Volunteer labor is often the only way that many homeowners can complete necessary construction and repairs.

Volunteers are also needed to manage materials, administer programs, answer phones, manage information, provide logistical support, coordinate and host volunteers, and any number of other activities.

Construction specialists are skilled at estimating the cost of repairs and determining appropriate use of volunteer labor.

Emotional and/or spiritual caregivers provide a calm and comforting presence when survivors are most in need of a safe place to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Disaster case managers partner with survivors to verify recovery needs, establish plans and access resources for recovery.

SAY: All these functions are necessary, and each must be designed to function in harmony with the others.

Long-term recovery may go on for months—even years—until the entire disaster area returns to what is often referred to as a “new normal.” Many hope to return to life exactly as it was before the disaster, and perhaps even better. While we can take steps toward achieving our “previous condition” or to mitigate against damage in the future, the fact is, life will be different. None of us can say with certainty that communities will be less

disaster-prone. All too often, communities fail to embrace recovery as their responsibility, so people, too, may be left without adequate recovery options.

ASK: How can churches help a community's lengthy recovery? Churches have always played a vital role in a community's recovery but have, overtime, ceded that territory to government and aid organizations. Why?

SUMMARIZE: No organization or group in a neighborhood is better positioned than the church to understand the community and to assist with the development of a community-based recovery.

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SLIDE: VISIBLE PRESENCE

"When the local church gets involved, that's our door into disaster ministry."

SUMMARIZE: As the visible presence of the body of Christ, the local church is the place where members grow in faith and discipleship, putting their faith into action through ministry in the world. By understanding our calling, our connections and our context, we have a foundation on which we can better prepare for and respond to disasters as the people of the United Methodist Church.

Module 1 Ready Congregants

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SLIDE: MODULE 1 - READY CONGREGANTS

SAY: THE CHURCH HELPS OTHERS MORE EFFECTIVELY WHEN CHURCH MEMBERS ARE PREPARED, READY AND RESILIENT THEMSELVES

FACILITATOR PROMPT: If this is a “stand alone” session, consider beginning with the Introduction, followed by the Overview section - beginning with **SLIDE: # 11 Phases of Disaster**

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SLIDE: PREPARE YOURSELF - Put your own mask on first

ASK: What does “being ready” for disaster look like? Are you ready?

SAY: We are more effective when we are prepared and when our own needs are met. From a position of strength we are more able to help others.

ASK: What national organization comes to mind when you think about personal disaster readiness?

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SLIDE: PREPARE YOUR FAMILY

WEB PAGE: ARC RED CROSS READY <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family>

SAY: The American Red Cross is the most recognizable national organization for disaster preparedness. Its web site is rich with information about disaster preparedness. Let’s get “Red Cross Ready.”

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: If internet access is available, go to the live site and demonstrate various resources located there.

VIEW SLIDE SHOW AND VIDEO: <http://arcbrcr.org/#SITE>

Go to website and watch selected segments, as identified below. If time permits, you can watch the entire series, which is over 15 minutes.

WATCH: “Get a Kit” (2:12)

ASK: What additional items would you want in your own personal emergency kit?

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: The transcript of the video can be downloaded, which may be helpful if no internet access is available.

Optional video WATCH: Jamie Lee Curtis PERSONALIZING YOUR DISASTER KIT (2:12):

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=disaster+ready+jamie+lee+curtis+video&FORM=VIRE2#view=detail&mid=9597B0E9511F91F492569597B0E9511F91F49256>

WATCH: “Make a Plan” (3:36)

ASK: Where have you designated as a meeting place in the event that you have to evacuate your home?

WATCH: “Be Informed” (1:49)

ASK: What are the trusted sources of communication in your community?

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SLIDE: PREPARE NOW - Create Your Own Personal Preparedness Emergency Kit

ACTIVITY: Create Your Own Personal Preparedness Emergency Kit

HANDOUT: Get a Kit, Make a Plan, Be Informed (PDF) found in curriculum appendix

http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240190_Be_Red_Cross_Ready.pdf

HANDOUT: Have participants complete their **emergency contact card**. Download the template here

http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240194_ECCard.pdf

and as found in the appendix.

HANDOUT: Family Preparedness List found in appendix

ACTIVITY: Instruct participants to complete the **Family Preparedness List**. Draw attention to the last page where inventory of valuables, insurance coverage and other legal documents are mentioned. Initiate a class discussion on how prepared we are based upon the check list. Capture highlights from the discussion on chart paper.

Note to facilitator: There are numerous emergency/survival kit videos available on various websites. Please check the American Red Cross site...and others...to personalize for your audience.

ACTIVITY: Sign up for local text alerts and warnings and download weather apps.

Stay aware of worsening weather conditions. Download free apps to your smartphone from recognized sources. Search for “FEMA alert,” and then download the FEMA specific app. Search for American Red Cross alerts, and download their real-time emergency alerts.

ACTIVITY: Download the Home Inventory App from United Policy Holders

<http://uphelp.org/library/resource/uphelp-home-inventory-app>

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SLIDE: PREPARE TO CARE FOR AT RISK CONGREGANTS

SAY: How shall we find those in our church family who would be at risk during and following a natural disaster? Perhaps we survey/discuss what those needs might be at a church service or gathering. The results of the survey should be entered into a database with a designated staff or church member who regularly updates the information. The survey should be designed so as to prompt respondents to think about someone who is not present.

Among the vulnerabilities to consider would be:

- People with a condition which limits their ability to see, hear, understand or act on instructions on staying safe.
- Isolated by geography, family size, age, or location.

- People who do not have adequate finances, transportation or resources to protect against and recover from a disaster.
- People whose race, sex, lifestyle, ethnicity, language or culture might render them without adequate support.
- Single working parents
- Caregivers
- Communities provide many resources to address special needs. A resource list, posted on public church space or bulletin boards and handed out in newsletters and bulletins will provide a ready resource for members.

HANDOUT: Blank plan/assess/risk/resource chart in appendix

SAY: A risk assessment for special populations in the church may tend to categorize people as “need” only and may overlook that, for all of us, we are both “need” and “resource.” Some time should be spent considering how people with limitations may also be resources for the church as it plans to keep members safe and help each other.

ACTIVITY: Think about members who are at risk before, during and after a disaster. Assign each person in the room (or group) 4 vulnerabilities, e.g. age, single head of household, functional needs, etc. Name at least one risk and one resource for each. Have individuals (or group) report their findings.

SAY: Considering those who may have special needs serves as a perfect transition to recognizing special skills and services of members in the next section.

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SLIDE: PREPARE TO IDENTIFY READY CONGREGANTS

NOTE: Because the members of our congregation are our most important responsibility and asset in disaster response, this slide is repeated in Modules 2 and 3.

SAY: The best resource of any community of faith lies within the people, not the building. Different church cultures include members from the service industries, government leadership, construction trades, medical, education and legal professions. As we noted earlier, each member is at risk to a varying degree, but each is also a resource for special services, talents and spiritual gifts.

ACTIVITY: Give class members a copy of the **Congregational Assets/Skills Survey** and ask them whether the categories accurately capture the gifts and talents of their members. If not, what categories would they add to their personalized survey?

ASK: When would be the best time to collect this information about a congregation? How would the information be captured (files, database, etc.), and how would it be kept current?

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SLIDE: PREPARE FOR NEXT STEPS

PHOTO CREDIT: family shelter project - North Alabama Conference

ASK: How can we help each other accomplish readiness? What are some things we can do to overcome the reasons why people tend not to be ready?

FACILITATOR PROMPT: Add to the conversation some suggested ways the church family can be helpful as members consider their family's readiness for disaster:

- Sunday school classes provide a perfect audience to discuss disaster planning efforts in your church. Tell the classes about your plans to be ready for a disaster and how they can help.
- Schedule a Wednesday night meal and follow it with a project to scan important documents and save to keychain flash drives.
- Distribute Family Preparedness Lists in Sunday school classes or during services.
- Designate one Sunday a year as readiness Sunday and make it a contest to see which class returns the most filled in surveys (have a prize).
- Set up a collection Sunday for gathering emergency box supplies (*e.g.*, flashlights, survival radios, emergency blankets, flash drives for important documents) and distribute to homebound.
- Ask youth to take cameras to shut-ins so they can document possessions for insurance.
- Make presentations to United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, United Methodist Youth Fellowship and groups in your church.

Module 2 Ready Churches

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SUB-TITLE SLIDE: MODULE 2 - READY CHURCHES

SAY: **Ready Churches** emphasizes the importance of protecting church property and the people within the property, before and immediately following a disaster, and of appropriate use of church property in disaster response.

Time: Budget about two hours for this unit.

Target Audience: Everyone, especially church leaders including, but not limited to, pastors, trustees, Sunday school superintendent, lay leader, missions coordinator, treasurer and finance committee members, young adult and youth representatives, and others.

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SLIDE: READY CHURCHES

1. Identify a plan to protect people and property
2. Initiate a preliminary plan for the use of the church property after a disaster

SAY: Ready churches protect church property and the people within the property before and immediately following a disaster, and determine appropriate use of church property in disaster response.

Objectives: Participants will (1) identify one or more steps to take in order to mitigate against disaster-caused damage to property; (2) identify one or more steps to take in order to prevent harm to people who are present in or on church property when disasters or emergencies occur; and (3) be able to assess the utilization of church property following a disaster within or near the community of the church.

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SLIDE: DISASTER READY CHURCH

SAY: We are the people *of* the church, and we often meet *in* the church. The church is a communal space where we can experience God and give God's people a resting place where all who are hurting can feel the presence of God's love. So, as stewards of church property, our responsibility is to assure...to the extent possible...that our buildings are a place of safety for people who seek a refuge in times of trouble. There is something about a sacred place that calls us on a deep level when there is trouble. People turn to the church...whether they are members or not... whether they are Christians or not...as a response to their deepest spiritual needs.

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SLIDE: READY CHURCHES RESTORE HOPE

SAY: The church is a sanctuary, especially in times of trouble. Therefore, it is important, as the community seeks to get back to normal, that the church also gets back to normal. Churches can "do" ministry out of broken buildings, but it is easier when the building is

structurally sound and ready for operations. We also want our church doors to be open so we can receive... and so we can send. Not only do we need a shelter or safe place for respite, but we also need a place where others can find help. If our capacity for outreach is hampered because we were ill-prepared (damaged structures, loss of property or injuries), we will find ourselves turning inward to repair our church and focusing on our needs rather than those of our suffering community.

Slide 28

SLIDE: READY CHURCHES PREPARE FOR DISASTER

SAY: Being a ready church requires us to be good stewards by preparing our property: the buildings, the contents, and protocols and procedures for emergencies of all kinds. Let's consider each of these in more detail in order to determine our readiness.

Slide 29

READY FACILITIES / BUILDINGS / STRUCTURES

SLIDE: Ready buildings

SAY: Recovery depends largely on our readiness. As we are called to build our lives on the strong rock of our faith in Christ (I Cor. 3: 9-14), so we are called to strengthen our buildings, their surroundings and our staff and members for a return to vital church life and ministry after natural disasters or emergencies. Study, training, assessment and communication are essential as we consider our church's strengths and its weaknesses. Churches can be in ministry out of damaged buildings, but it's a lot harder to offer sanctuary when ours is broken.

Our church buildings represent significant investments of prayer, time and financial sacrifice from those who felt God's call to build a house of worship. When we do not adequately protect or insure them, we are putting at risk the gifts of countless givers who preceded us. When we prayerfully consider the annual review of our insurance coverage, we can determine where we leave God's mission at risk, e.g. replacement cost for the building's historic windows, coverage for the parsonage and the family's property, the personal possessions of the staff and ministry team in the church, liability coverage for those who work within or visit our buildings.

Slide 30

SLIDE: READY FOR WORSHIP

SAY: Worship shouldn't be interrupted, even when the building is unusable. The household of faith shouldn't depend on a structure. Resuming worship as soon as possible provides an opportunity for the church and community to process their experiences and "get back to normal." Don't forget the importance of Church School. Children need stability resumed as soon as possible and will need loving support to accept their feelings as legitimate, e.g. it's okay to be scared, and the people who care about you will listen without judgment to your feelings.

If necessary, locate a suitable alternative for worship, such as a school or another church. We must continue to be brothers and sisters in the circle of love...even when the church family has to meet in a school, on a parking lot or under a tent. The only exceptions are when it is unsafe (as in a pandemic) for us to gather. It is helpful for churches to plan ahead to consider where to meet in a situation when the building is not safe. Consider a memorandum of agreement (MOU) with another facility, such as a school, that does not use its building on Sunday.

Slide 31

SLIDE: CHURCH FACILITIES ASSESSMENT

WEB LINK: www.churchmutual.com Self-Inspection Safety Checklist (24 pages)

ACTIVITY: Refer to **Public Area** (page 11) of the **self-inspection safety checklist** https://www.churchmutual.com/media/pdf/Self_Inspection_Checklist.pdf and hand out a copy for each participant. Invite class to roam church in small groups and assess the church.

FACILITATOR NOTE: You may wish to have an entire copy of the Self-Inspection Safety Checklist in the room for your presentation. It is also recommended that a conference insurance subject matter expert attends this module to discuss the conference's recommendations for churches.

SAY: Insurance is the primary means of being ready to repair or replace damage to church property. Other considerations may include appeals for donations, fundraising, loans, and grants. Another valuable resource is volunteer labor. **But don't expect your annual conference or donations to the disaster to cover damage to your church building or parsonage.**

SAY: Following every natural disaster, numerous property owners, including church families, have to face the fact (and sometimes the scrutiny) that they have chosen not to insure their property. Whether it is a detail they've forgotten, or they've chosen to take the risk (and save the expense), or simply cannot afford insurance, the results are the same: losses that must be covered from some other source. Many churches following Hurricane Katrina, others after Superstorm Sandy, and those flooded during the Detroit flooding in August 2014 were either not insured, under-insured or had no flood insurance. **Flood damage coverage requires a separate policy.** Check with your local government to see if your property is in a "flood zone." If you perform some inexpensive measures now you can offset future expensive damage and possibly reduce your insurance premium. Two simple, low-cost damage-reducing measures would be to clean leaves out of rain gutters and placing permanent elevated water barriers around basement windows and entries. Your insurance agent could suggest other measures your congregation could take to reduce your insurance premium costs.

Pastors take note: *The church's policy might not cover the cost of replacing your personal items at the church or in the parsonage. This requires a renter's policy. Make sure your renter's policy will, indeed, cover loss of your property in your residence and in the church, such as your library and files.*

ASK: The expense of insurance may be one of the reasons churches do not adequately prepare to recover from disasters. What are some other reasons why churches might not prepare or protect their buildings?

Slide 32

READY RECORDS

SLIDE: Protect the Church's Historical Record

SAY: All churches are part of the richness of the life and landscape of their city or county. We should be cognizant of protecting not only their structural security, but their participation in community life as well. The historical records of some Gulf Coast churches were erased when their buildings and documents were swept into the rising water during Hurricane Katrina. Birth, death and marriage records, family histories and precious pictures are gone forever. What would it take to save our story and preserve it for future inspiration?

Your church's future may rest on the wisdom and lessons of the past. Church records tell our story: who we have been and where we have influenced our community's faith and resilience. Safeguarding records is a straightforward and affordable process. If records are not routinely kept safe, what you do to restore church life and resume ministry after a disaster will seem like a calamity in itself. Here are some simple things to do now.

1. Put your vital records in a fireproof safe.
2. Make sure the safe is big enough to hold the kind of oversize books that may have been used to collect birth, marriage and death records. If possible, the container for the documents within the safe should be watertight as well.
3. Use a safe deposit box for those records that are not used frequently, such as deeds, insurance papers, and mortgages. Because banks flood too, make sure there are copies of these documents stored elsewhere.
4. Cloud storage provides additional safeguarding and is accessible from a remote location if the church, the bank or other backups are unavailable.
5. If your church uses a computer for its finances or other vital functions, be sure your treasurer backs up his or her work regularly and takes a backup offsite. The membership roll and other specialized data can be stored in the safe, as well as backed up on external storage.
6. Every conference has a historian who is anxious to safeguard church records and historical documents. Copies of irreplaceable information should be placed with the conference historian as well as the state library and archives, which will microfilm important documents or copy onto digital media.
7. Treasured books, historical Bibles and fragile documents may be copied by experts who provide specialized service to make an exact replica of a volume the church uses or displays so that the original can be preserved and stored safely.
8. An annual purge of church books, documents and records may be vitally important to both underscore what needs to be copied and preserved and to eliminate duplications, redundancies and potential fire hazards.

Slide 33

READY ON-GOING MINISTRIES

SLIDE: Ready On-Going Ministries

SAY: Most United Methodist churches are longstanding members of their communities, with ties to social, political, spiritual, charitable and business structures. Community members depend on our churches for Scout meetings, well baby classes, fitness centers, food and clothing distribution and many other activities and weekly or daily events. If the church structure is damaged, those events and meetings become even more critical for healing as community members struggle to find new footing on the shifting sands of disaster. Without a plan for continuation, community gatherings and services are cancelled, which slows the psychological healing of survivors.

ASK: What on-going ministries are present in your church? What is the church or visiting organization's plan to continue those meetings and services if the church is damaged? Could any of these ministries become a resource for disaster ministry?

ACTIVITY: Compile a list of the class's church ministries and activities on chart paper.

HANDOUT: After the activity, handout Continuity of Operations Planning tip sheet from *Be A Ready Congregation NDIN** http://www.ndin.org/ndin_resources/tipsheets_v1208/08_NDIN_TS_COOP.pdf

Slide 34

SLIDE: PREPARE TO IDENTIFY READY CONGREGANTS

SAY: The best resource of any community of faith lies within the people, not the building. Different church cultures include members from the service industries, government leadership, construction trades, medical, education and legal professions. As we noted earlier, each member is at risk to a varying degree, but each is also a resource for special services, talents and spiritual gifts.

ACTIVITY: Give class members a copy of the **Congregational Assets/Skills Survey** and ask them whether the categories accurately capture the gifts and talents of their members. If not, what categories would they add to their personalized survey?

ASK: When would be the best time to collect this information about a congregation? How would the information be captured (files, database, etc.), and how would it be kept current?

Slide 35

SLIDE: Use of Church Building in Disaster Response: How suitable is your facility for response ministries?

SAY: Module 1 of Connecting Neighbors concerns keeping church members safe and disaster-resilient, while also assessing their skills and assets for helping each other and the community. As we think about our church's role in responding, we need to make the same kind of assessment of the church property. Consider each church in the community as a piece of a larger disaster response puzzle. How do we determine where our church fits in the puzzle?

ASK: What are examples of “response ministries”?

ACTIVITY: Have the class list as many as they can think of. Examples may include donations, shelters, hospitality, emergency operating center, call center, *etc.* Encourage the class to “think outside the box,” including charging station, bathroom stop on evacuation route, pet friendly hospitality, *etc.* List on board/chart paper.

- How does the **size** of your church affect its use in disaster response?
- How might the **occupations, interests and skills, location** of the congregation influence the church’s response and decisions surrounding the use of the church?

Slide 36

SLIDE: CHURCH BUILDING AS A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

SAY: The “church” is not the building, but our church property offers opportunities for a variety of ministries before and after a disaster. Often, the community’s infrastructure is also damaged and the “usual” places of refuge or support are unavailable. When churches consider in advance what the buildings, parking lots, playgrounds and open spaces have to offer the hurting community, we prove that we believe what we are taught and claim to believe: God expects us to be neighbors to the world around us.

ASK: What would a church need in order to serve as:

A shelter? (Facilitator prompt: Providing shelter space for disaster-impacted individuals is a unique ministry that churches are often urged to provide. Any church considering opening a shelter should speak to the local American Red Cross chapter about its requirements and discuss the benefits of ARC insurance, experience and support. It is also advisable to contact other churches that have served as shelters so the decision is made with a clear understanding of the ramifications.)

A volunteer center? (Facilitator prompt: Space, furniture, food preparation space, supplies.)

A donations center? (Facilitator prompt: Available space, easy access, location in community.)

Slide 37

SLIDE: DONATIONS MANAGEMENT – MATERIAL GOODS

ASK: What do you see in this photo?

SAY: As you can see, donated goods have overtaken the sanctuary. The “normal” act of worship is impeded; people who may have functional access needs may not be able to access the sanctuary at all! Managing and offering much-needed donations, however, can be a meaningful way for the church to respond.

In any disaster, donations management and messaging are huge challenges. Assisting givers and receivers as they respond faithfully can drain the soul and stress the mind. Why not start now? Help your members find ways to give what they have (prayers, stock, dollars, stuff) appropriately to disasters that are on the congregation’s mind and heart. Explain why donated clothing cannot reach the intended survivor...so find a way to give gently worn clothes (and donate the tax deductible value) locally or host a yard sale and donate the proceeds. A creative way to engage givers brings joy and prevents the “second

disaster” of a mountain of used clothing that will eventually be fodder for the landfill. Unwanted donations can become “the second disaster.”

Sometimes people will want their donations to go directly to a specific individual, church or community. Rather, gifts to the disaster response will be used where there is greatest need and without regard to a survivor’s race, religion, or location throughout the entire disaster area.

When offers are made for unneeded items, or offers for volunteer services cannot be utilized, it is appropriate to refer these to other agencies. When declining offers, ask if the caller would like a list of items on the “needed” list.

Record every offer of help and in-kind donation from the beginning. Express gratitude and stay in touch with donors and volunteers as much as possible.

When the church opts to manage material donations, establish a mechanism to make sure all items are clean, sorted and inventoried as much as possible. This requires a lot of volunteer time and commitment. To assure sanitary conditions, all clothing and linens should be washed thoroughly before being brought into the church. Sofas and mattresses and the like can be a challenge in these circumstances. This is why it is recommended to allow other organizations to manage clothing and these types of donations wherever possible.

Encourage prospective donors to consider a monetary donation. Tell them that a cash donation is the most effective means of providing assistance to survivors of the disaster. Cash offers much more flexibility in the response, and often by the time donated goods are gathered, shipped, and received, the need for them has expired. Cash allows for immediate purchase while the need is valid. Money spent for supplies in the local community will help stimulate its economy and keep people employed.

Slide 38

SLIDE: DONATIONS MANAGEMENT – cash donations

SAY: Local congregations often receive and/or raise funds in response to a disaster. In these circumstances, it is helpful for the church to report to the district and conference the amount of funds raised. This will serve to promote awareness, and provide opportunities for the conference to offer support to the efforts of the local churches responding to their communities, so that all potential resources can be considered in order to restore damaged churches to full functioning. Direct assistance to survivors/beneficiaries in the form of cash is discouraged. Vendor payments, direct services and material supplies are the preferred form of assistance. UMCOR also recommends that direct assistance be provided equitably based upon need as much as possible. If the church is not handling donations, donors may be referred to the district or conference office. In all cases, the church should keep excellent records of disbursements and keep the district or conference office informed.

Slide 39

SLIDE: AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SAY: Once a church has decided on its course of action in the wake of a disaster, who in the church has the responsibility and the authority to put the ministry into action? Keep in mind that all operations for disaster response would have a clearly defined starting point and stopping point. It is best to refrain from giving that task to the pastor. Pastors have many responsibilities already and, if new to the church, may not know all the procedures or processes in place. It is best to have a member of the congregation take on the initiation role and provide continuity between clergy assignments.

Church disaster response succeeds or fails based on the leadership in place and a thoughtful succession plan. Many churches “had” a plan and a leader who is no longer active; when no one else is designated to maintain that role, the “plan” ceases to exist.

ASK: Would authority belong to the trustees?

Effective trustees are Christian stewards of the property God has entrusted to the congregation. Church trustees supervise and maintain the property of the congregation to ensure that disciple-making ministries of the congregation are appropriate for the facility and that local legal requirements related to the property are satisfied.

ASK: Would authority be the administrative council's?

An effective council chairperson brings initiative, coordination, and collaboration to the group that does planning, goal-setting, implementation, and evaluation of ministry for the congregation.

The church council is the administrative agency of the charge conference to envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate the ministry of the congregation. (*The Book of Discipline of the United*

Methodist Church, 2012, ¶252) The chair of this group is elected annually by the charge conference (¶251.3).

ASK: Would authority belong to the finance chair?

The finance committee compiles an annual budget in support of the mission and vision of the local church and submits the budget to the church leadership team for review and adoption, recommending any mid-year adjustments to the church leadership team.

The finance committee is also responsible for developing and carrying out plans to raise enough income to support the budget that has been approved.

ASK: Does the laity have any responsibility?

The ministry of the laity is the work of mission or ministry to which each believer is called. As Christians we are all called to this ministry or priesthood. Each of us has a responsibility to proclaim the Good News and reach out to others in love.

After considering all the positions in your church, you may decide that an individual within your church has the accountability necessary to be given the responsibility to put your ministry in action. Whoever that person is, he or she will be responsible to all the different areas of the church that the ministry touches.

If your church chooses to have a local church disaster coordinator, maybe that would be the appropriate person? Whomever you choose, these are some things to consider when designating this person:

- Distance to church

- Availability
- Other responsibilities
- Level of interest
- Ability to clearly communicate
- Willingness to work him/herself out of a job by choosing and training a successor.

ACTIVITY: Offer a scenario for discussion, such as the one following:

Your church, membership about 500, sits on the highest point of land in your community. A recent flood has left heavy damage to the surrounding community, from flooded yards to as much as three feet inside the first floor of homes. Your church wants to be a hospitality center for relief workers in the area. (This was predetermined because of location; other community facilities are designated as shelters.) To be a relief center you will need access to the fellowship hall, the chapel, the restrooms and the kitchen.

1. Who in your church gives approval to use the building?
2. Who makes sure all insurance issues, including liability, are addressed?
3. Who decides it is time to open the hospitality center?
4. Who oversees the volunteers serving the center?
5. Who recruits volunteers to serve the center?
6. Who oversees the financial arrangements necessary to run the center?
7. Who has the authority to purchase supplies?
8. What would be the administrative council's role in this scenario?
9. If not in charge, what would be the pastor's role in the hospitality center?
10. How does the community know you are there to serve them?

Slide 40

SLIDE: VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

SAY: Church buildings are at risk for fire, natural disasters, power outages, medical emergencies and terrorism. Even the deranged person who comes to our churches should find us ready to protect our buildings and congregations from harm. One of our strong partners in disaster response is the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The resource FEMA has prepared, Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship, can be an excellent resource for churches. See links in appendix https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/developing_eops_for_houses_of_worship_final.pdf

Mitigating active shooter events is a very complex and difficult procedure—it isn't always possible. This type of crisis can occur at any time, for example, during worship, congregational events or regular business hours. The best course of action to protect and prepare your congregation is to develop and practice an Emergency Action Plan (EAP); see the 'Preparedness' section (of the TIP SHEET) for more information. Additionally, houses of worship can and should take certain steps to decrease the likelihood of experiencing an active shooter situation. As a religious leader, you may be at the hub of community outreach and have a clear understanding of your surrounding area, as well as your religious community. Work to foster a welcoming environment and respectful attitude both

within your house of worship and in the surrounding community. One way to minimize the risk of violent incidents is to keep yourself up to date with happenings in your community and with developments among its various populations in order to understand your house of worship's vulnerabilities. In addition, open and mutually supportive relationships with local police and other emergency services should be established and maintained. Work with local police to identify and monitor hate crime trends or groups who may pose a threat to you, your congregation or community.

HANDOUT: MITIGATION/PREVENTION (from NDIN TIP SHEET - see appendix)

http://www.n-din.org/ndin_resources/tipsheets_v1208/07_NDIN_TS_ActiveShooter.pdf

ACTIVITY: Ask participants to review the "Active Shooter in a House of Worship" Tip Sheet (NDIN) in the appendix. If the group is large enough, split them into three smaller groups and ask them to address one of the questions below.

- What steps can the church trustees take to increase the safety of people should violence erupt?
- How might inviting local police and emergency managers help to minimize risks of violence?
- What action steps should be taken to minimize risks to children in Sunday school and other church-based children's ministries?

SAY: Even the best of efforts to mitigate risk may not prevent an act of violence in the church. Attending to congregational recovery after an active shooter situation is critically important in order to promote tolerance, peace, unity and understanding. The church leaders should not hesitate to reach out for support in these circumstances.

Slide 41

SLIDE: RESPONDING TO IMMINENT VIOLENCE

SAY: There are three recommended responses to imminent violence.

The first is to **Run**

Have an escape route and plan in mind

Leave your belongings behind

Keep your hands visible

Another option is to **Hide**

In an area out of the shooter's view

Block entrance to hiding place / lock doors

Silence cell phone

And as a last resort, **Act**

Incapacitate the aggressor

Act with physical aggression and throw items

Slide 42

SLIDE: RESTORING WHOLENESS

SAY: Even the best of efforts to mitigate risk may not prevent an act of violence in the church. Attending to congregational recovery after any verbal or physical event that harms or frightens anyone is critically important in order to promote tolerance, peace, unity and understanding. Additionally, as the household of faith--loving supporters of one another--churches should also remember that our souls belong to God. In every life-altering event...especially when there is violence, we are the church. How we support one another spiritually after a violent event is part of our calling.

ASK: Without intentional intervention, the cycle of violence and other issues may continue. How do we stay true to our faith after the violence? What are ways we support our church family, especially our most vulnerable, when our church experiences violence?

FACILITATOR PROMPTS: Take our responsibility seriously to help each other heal; extend pastoral care to one another; There is no “one size fits all” response; each may react differently; each may cope differently. Avoid blame and offer opportunities for forgiveness.

SUMMARIZE: Specially-trained clergy, other professionals and paraprofessionals have the skills and compassion to help the church through difficult times such as these. Church leaders should not hesitate to reach out for support in these circumstances.

Slide 43

SLIDE: SECURING THE CHURCH

SAY: We’ve discussed how to be sure our church is a safe place for ministry to take place, ways to react to emergencies and ways to use our facilities and encourage our congregations for response ministries.

- What is the first step you will take to get this process going?
- With whom will you share this information?
- Who are the people you will involve in decision-making?
- What steps can you/your church take to make your property more secure and free of hazards?
- Are there other people/places/agencies you need to talk with that can give guidance?

Slide 44

SLIDE: NEXT STEPS

SUMMARIZE: Dozens, hundreds, or perhaps thousands of God’s beloveds are at risk every week in churches that are not protected from or prepared for disaster. Every business in your community, with as many employees as worship in your church on Sunday, has a disaster plan. Why don’t our churches? We are charged by God to be good stewards of our resources, and yet our church buildings and property are among the most valuable resources we have to share with God’s people, and they are often at risk. When we are prepared, we fulfill God’s injunction to be the “neighbor” who lifts the fallen, heals the broken and shelters the fragile.

Module 3: Ready Response

Slide 45

SLIDE: MODULE 3 - READY RESPONSE

SAY: This third module in the series is designed to help each of you to (1) be able to identify at least one disaster ministry your church might be willing and able to implement before and/or after a community disaster; and (2) initiate a preliminary plan to engage your church and to cooperate with other households of faith and the community in order to be prepared to respond in the event of a disaster.

NOTE TO FACILITATOR: The Overview presentation should be offered prior to this module.

Slide 46

SLIDE: READY RESPONSE OBJECTIVES

SAY: In this module of Connecting Neighbors, we are focusing on identifying at least one disaster ministry your/our church might be willing and able to implement before and/or after a community disaster, and we will try to initiate a preliminary plan to engage the church and to cooperate with other households of faith and the community in order to be prepared to respond in the event of a disaster.

Slide 47

SLIDE: PREPARE TO IDENTIFY READY CONGREGANTS

NOTE: Because the members of our congregation are our most important responsibility and asset in disaster response, this slide is repeated in Modules 1, 2 and 3.

SAY: The best resource of any community of faith lies within the people, not the building. Different church cultures include members from the service industries, government leadership, construction trades, medical, education and legal professions. As we noted earlier, each member is at risk to a varying degree, but each is also a resource for special services, talents and spiritual gifts.

ACTIVITY: Give class members a copy of the **Congregational Assets/Skills Survey** and ask them whether the categories accurately capture the gifts and talents of their members. If not, what categories would they add to their personalized survey?

ASK: When would be the best time to collect this information about a congregation? How would the information be captured (files, database, etc.), and how would it be kept current?

Slide 48

SLIDE: BE THE CHURCH

SAY: In the church, we talk a lot about “community.” We claim to care; we SAY we love; we offer hospitality to those who enter. Disaster response gives us the opportunity to BE the church, to reach out and to live out our calling.

If our community “owns” the disaster, and...

If our church is an integral part of the fabric and culture of the community...

Then our church has much to offer – and to receive – by investing our time, talent, gifts, service and witness in our community’s disaster readiness, response, and recovery.

Do not be afraid! Do not limit your church! Ministry is everywhere and vast. Every church of every size can provide ministry. So let’s think outside the box and explore our capabilities for various disaster response ministries and ways to engage community partners.

ASK: What do people need after a disaster? If you have experienced a disaster--fire, flood, tornado, hurricane, ice storm, power outage--what was (or would have been) helpful? Think creatively about your pets, family, vehicle, hygiene needs, and comfort.

ASK: How do culture and ethnicity affect our understanding of “need”? What does the church bring, in terms of response, which disaster survivors might need?

SAY: For the purposes of our discussion about church response, we need to recall our conversation from the Introduction about the stages of a disaster. Remember that immediately after an event, the community enters the Relief phase, when those who are impacted may be in desperate need of the basics that are required to sustain life. As the community segues into Recovery, the needs begin to change and become less about sustaining life and more about undergirding a new normal, so that survivors, churches and the community are stronger and more resilient to face what may come next. How communities Review...and think about mitigation against future disaster...informs what is happening in the community after Recovery.

ASK: Churches often understand the urgencies around the early days following a disaster; community arms are embracing, removing debris, feeding, touching lives. Are there ministries that churches might consider after shelters, urgent supplies and kitchens are no longer needed?

ACTIVITY: In small groups, write down some of the possible ways a church could be helpful after a disaster, in Relief, Recovery and Review. After 5-10 minutes, ask one representative from each group to briefly summarize the group’s responses. Note that there will be unique responses from each group. Comment on the limitless ways churches can be in ministry to disaster-impacted communities.

FACILITATOR PROMPT: (Some examples include)

- Volunteer clean-up team, Early Response Team deployment
- Delivering relief supplies
- Needs assessment or Information and Referral, Neighbor-to-neighbor visit (Slide 53)
- Sheltering (NOTE: Participants in Module II consider the church facility’s capability for sheltering. When considering the missional opportunities for sheltering, it is recommended that churches discuss options with their local American Red Cross chapter, as well as churches that have served as Red Cross shelters, for discernment about the opportunities and the responsibilities.)
- Volunteer reception
- Warming station, cooling station, charging station, evacuation station
- Community meals / fellowship
- Children’s ministries

- Pet care
- Laundry
- Tool loan
- Communications hub
- Church maintenance, building usage, and clean-up
- Hospitality
- Prayer team, space for prayer

ASK: How is emotional and spiritual care evidenced in these activities? How do we demonstrate a calm and caring presence through these activities? How do we demonstrate a spirit-filled presence?

Slide 49

SLIDE: THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

SAY: Working with the connectional church, other faith-based communions, and community and governmental agencies and organizations will help resource unmet needs, eliminate duplicated efforts and allow us to know where needs are not currently being met. No one organization or individual can go it alone.

Slide 50

SLIDE: CONNECT WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

ASK: Can you name some of the potential faith-based “players” in your community?

(Examples for facilitator)

- Other United Methodist churches
- Inter-faith organizations (multiple denominations)
- Ministerial alliances (local pastor groups)
- Other denominations (Lutherans, Baptist, Presbyterian, *etc.*)
- Salvation Army

ASK: What governmental service agencies are represented in your community?

(Examples for facilitator)

- Emergency Management
- Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Social Services / Health and Welfare
- Council on Aging / Area Office on Aging
- Economic Development
- Waste management

ASK: What civic or nonprofit community agencies are active in your community?

(Examples for facilitator)

- Food pantry
- Clothing closet
- Self-help programs
- American Red Cross

- United Way

ACTIVITY: “Speed dating” for community disaster networking--Divide class in half and have half sit on one side of long table(s) and the other half facing them. Assign the name of a fictitious or real faith-based agency, nonprofit, or government service agency (write on paper in front of them) to each person on one side of the table. (Example; First Baptist Church, American Red Cross, Mustard Seed thrift shop, Housing Authority, Catholic Church, United Way, Salvation Army, etc.) On the other side of the table, each person represents a local United Methodist church, district or conference or an agency. (Have them name what church or agency they will be.) The scenario: The community has experienced a natural disaster. There’s talk about organizing a community response (long-term recovery group) to help those who are unable to recover. Ask the church/agency side of the table to spend 1 minute speaking to each person and then moving to the next. (Ring a buzzer or bell to get them to move to the next.) The script: “I represent ____ church (or agency). If the community develops a long-term recovery group, we’re interested in participating and we have _____ resources or assets or interest. Is your group willing to partner with us and make us stronger...and what resources can you bring?” Instruct the group to take notes.

This activity will be really short, but should give participants a chance to see how quickly a network of partners working together can strengthen and expand response. Debrief with the class to see what they discovered about joint ministry and the expansion of capability as agencies agree to partner and build a robust response.

SAY: In order for our churches to be effective following disaster, networking with mission-focused groups is a critical component. When we do disaster ministry alone, even from a position of strength, some in the community will fall through the cracks. When we join hands across denominations and niche interests, it is much more likely we will exponentially expand the capability of our community to recovery.

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SLIDE: CONNECT WITH VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER

SAY: Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) is the gathering table for multiple agencies and organizations in your community that primarily use volunteers to serve in disaster response. This group helps us understand who the other “players” are and what their roles will be in a response effort. Some of the “players” include American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Mennonite Disaster Response, Society of St. Vincent DePaul, Brethren Disaster Ministries, Church World Service, World Renew, Habitat for Humanity, Presbyterian Disaster Response, Episcopal Relief and Development, Catholic Charities USA, and many others. Each of these organizations may have something to offer the disaster-affected community. National VOAD members set guidelines that help all community participants contribute to response in a positive manner in which cooperation, coordination, communication and collaboration are encouraged.

REFERENCE: www.NVOAD.org National VOAD Points of Consensus (in appendix)

HANDOUT: Volunteer Points of Consensus

ASK: Which of these points of agreement stand out to you? Why?

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SLIDE: BE EMPOWERED BY CHURCH CONNECTIONS

SAY: Our connectional system can be a real blessing when disasters strike, if we “tap into” the connection effectively. It is often tempting to do our work in a silo, forgetting to tell other United Methodist churches in our community, our district or our conference what ministries we have chosen. Not only do we drastically reduce the support we can receive, we also weaken survivor recovery by leaving other strong players out of the conversation. One large metropolitan church, with vast resources can do amazing ministry, but it can only reach so far. When it joins other churches in the district and links to the conference, the likelihood that we miss some hurting survivor is lessened. One small membership church feels defeated before it starts because it feels it cannot do much alone. Whatever we do (and whatever pride or isolation or turf issues that cause problems) to get in the way of sending hope and help to God’s beloveds is a bad thing.

SAY: In addition to other United Methodist churches that may be in your area, the following church agencies may have resources available for your disaster ministry.

- United Methodist Committee on Relief--training, mentoring, materials, etc.
- United Methodist Volunteers in Mission--volunteers and volunteer management
- Other United Methodist conferences--disaster-related information, sample plans, material support
- United Methodist Church and Society--a focus on social justice in disaster response
- United Methodist Men
- United Methodist Women
- United Methodist Youth Fellowship
- Board of Discipleship--worship resources
- United Methodist Committee on Communication-- help with information sharing

ASK: Where is the missing link to connect our United Methodist churches, laity and clergy when there is a disaster? How do neighboring districts and the conference find out the level of a disaster’s impact in a community? (See more about neighbor-to-neighbor walkabouts in the appendix.) How does UMCOR find out what disaster response ministry a local church, district or conference would consider and ways UMCOR can help?

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SLIDE: NEIGHBORHOOD WALK-ABOUT

SAY: A neighborhood visit or “walk-about” is a volunteer effort made by churches in their own communities during the early days following a disaster, after local authorities have determined it is safe to travel in the affected areas. Volunteers receive a short orientation and then check on the people in the neighborhoods that same day to “blanket” a designated segment of the disaster area. It is a caring outreach by churches to those nearby who have been impacted by the tragedy.

ASK: Why should churches organize to visit house-to-house?

Churches want to serve locally in disaster ministry by providing information and referral to survivors in the early relief phase.

The key message to survivors is: “Our church cares about the individuals and families in our neighborhood.”

ASK: How will it help?

...by providing basic information to survivors about where to find resources in the early relief phase and gathering information for district and conference disaster leadership to know where and how much help will be needed.

ASK: What’s the bigger picture?

The local church will provide the leadership, training, coordination and debriefing, gathering information to help identify needs for a district or conference response.

ASK: How can UMCOR help?

UMCOR can support conferences, districts and local church with site-specific suggestions about the value of neighborhood visits and methods to collect minimal information to jumpstart recovery response. UMCOR’s goal is to assist churches to engage in a conference-coordinated local volunteer event, put in place as soon as emergency management allows entry into a disaster area.

SAY: Additional information and resources to assist local churches in a neighborhood “walk-about” are located in a folder in the appendix for Module 3.

FACILITATOR NOTE: If there is class time to explore the Local Church Responsibility handout in the appendix, ask participants to consider how local United Methodist churches would get the message about this “just-in-time” neighborhood walk-about outreach ministry.

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SLIDE: VOLUNTEER NAVIGATORS

SAY: Volunteer Navigators Outreach prepares the church to serve locally in disaster ministry by providing information and referral to survivors in the early relief phase.

SAY: The purpose of Volunteer Navigators is to empower caring volunteers and local church leadership to respond to neighbors who have experienced a disaster by providing accurate and timely information as a gesture of care and a sign of hope.

SAY: Volunteer Navigators is a “just-in-time” volunteer and leadership training for volunteers within or near the affected community. It is an activity intended to provide assistance after a traumatic event “in time” to help ease the suffering of individuals and prevent further harm

SAY: Everyone who wants to help always asks: What can we do? Providing them with the knowledge and tools helps them to focus post-disaster help in meaningful and timely ways.

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SLIDE: WHAT DO VOLUNTEER NAVIGATORS DO?

SAY: These volunteers representing local congregations would be equipped to provide a visible and caring presence on behalf of the church.

Volunteer Navigators seek to express care and concern. They ask if the survivor wants and needs help and are equipped to offer referrals to existing support mechanisms and resources if known. Basic information will be shared with survivors regarding standard disaster resources, as well as a checklist for how to prepare for next steps.

“Standard resources” may include the phone number to register with FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) and for SBA (the Small Business Administration) for low interest loans. The Disaster Distress Helpline is another good phone number to provide to everyone, along with any known community or regional single point of contact for help, such as 2-1-1.

Categorical information gathering is extremely basic. The survivor’s address will be the only identifying information recorded. The information will be shared with community-based partners. Volunteer Navigators may tally visible damage so as to relay this information to disaster coordinators. The information will **not** be entered into a web-based data collection system under this effort.

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SLIDE: WHAT IS THE CONTEXT?

SAY: The time commitment is short-term and can be tailored to the scope and scale of a disaster.

Churches can embrace a half-day, a full day or longer.

The important thing to remember is that this is a short-term ministry in the relief phase of a disaster.

Volunteer Navigators do not provide crisis counseling or therapy, although their comforting presence may be very “therapeutic.”

There are no forms or applications for survivors to complete.

This is a faith-based response and is not governed by any outside agency once it is safe to do so.

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SLIDE: WHO CAN BE A VOLUNTEER NAVIGATOR?

SAY: This activity is ideally suited for volunteers associated with or otherwise invited by a local UMC, which is willing to provide short-term outreach coordination, host training, facilitate debriefing, and consolidate information gathered.

These are NOT teams. They are, literally, neighbors. They can return home and not be a burden to a damaged community. They should be recognized as fellow survivors and neighbors from a local church who want to reach out and be a caring presence.

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SLIDE: WHAT ABOUT BADGES?

SAY: Volunteer Navigators should have temporary stick-on nametags identifying them as from a particular United Methodist church. The church will only send those who are known to the congregation and only in pairs.

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SLIDE: WHAT'S IN THE ORIENTATION?

SAY: Volunteer Navigators who are “just-in-time” volunteers will need someone who is prepared to provide them an orientation. Those of you in this room are ideally suited to provide this type of leadership!

Let's consider what a local church might need to think about in preparation to send volunteer navigators into a disaster-impacted neighborhood.

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SLIDE: THE CHURCH'S ROLE

SAY: Now that we have an idea of what Volunteer Navigators do, let's summarize by highlighting the local church's role - to undergird and support the entire process from planning to completion.

- The initial step would be to communicate with the conference disaster response coordinator and/or district disaster response coordinator that the church is planning to check on your neighbors in this way. Discuss in advance of the event what the church and conference will do with any information gathered.
- Then begin to recruit volunteers from your church. Groups such as Stephen's Ministers, UMW, UMM, and UMVIM are great sources for volunteers. If there are Care Teams in your church or district, these trained volunteers can serve as team captains for volunteers. Don't forget that some volunteers will also be needed for clerical help to register volunteers, prepare nametags, assure there are refreshments, and other “hospitality” items for the volunteers. Church members who can't join the walking team can cook or provide supplies and food for the volunteers or small love gifts, e.g. cookies or homemade bread to take to the survivors.
- In the meantime, consider what material resources will be available for volunteers. Develop maps of the affected areas so that you can divide into sections to be assigned. Pay special attention to at-risk individuals and communities.
- On the day of the “walk about,” the church is responsible to provide the orientation. Explain each piece in the Orientation Packet, as well as the schedule, and allow for questions and conversation. Feed the spirit with an inspiring and spiritual start to the day, and feed the body with some energizing snacks.
- When the volunteers return, there is a de-briefing.
- Finally, the church returns full-circle to communicate with the district or conference to help coordinate next steps.

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SLIDE: WHAT IS IN THE NAVIGATORS ORIENTATION PACKET?

SAY: Let's take a look at what is in the orientation packet.

ACTIVITY: Explore the contents of the Orientation Packet.

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SLIDE: CONNECT IN SERVICE

SAY: Nothing could be more important to the God we serve and the communities around us than a loving response when human needs are at their most critical. Our worship services are centered around our devotion to God, but after worship we are called to leave the pew and take the church into the world...or bring the world into our church. Disasters give us unparalleled opportunity to seize our missional role and step into the places of severe need. As we offer a hand or a resting place to a neighbor, we preach a sermon, as St. Francis said, that is much more powerful than words. Loving our neighbor into a new relationship with God is service *and* evangelism.

ASK participants to think about their own churches and write down some ideas about the following:

- How do I find others in my church who might be interested in helping with this ministry?
- How do I find out about meetings in my area like Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)? Ministerial alliances? American Red Cross?
- What does the United Methodist connectional system have to help my church?
- Is anyone already doing this? How do I find out?
- Who in my community, other organizations or agencies, might I partner with for disaster response?
- Who is the first person I should talk to about ideas for local church readiness?

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SLIDE: NEXT STEPS

SUMMARIZE BY ASKING:

- Have you been able to identify at least one disaster ministry your church might be willing and able to implement before and/or after a community disaster?
- Have you been able to initiate a preliminary plan to engage the church and to cooperate with other households of faith and the community to take action in order to be prepared to respond in the event of a disaster?
- Are there other churches in the community that might be willing to partner with your church to augment an outreach ministry following disaster? When should other community churches be asked to engage with your church?

FACILITATOR PROMPT: Affirm the participants' initiative.

- Links, surveys and handouts are additional resources (found on digital media).

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SLIDE: BE THERE. BE HOPE. BE THE CHURCH.

PHOTO CREDIT: Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church