

The Presbytery of Elizabeth

A community of churches experiencing, enjoying, and sharing the love of Christ.

Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan

Adopted 9/25/2012

reformatted 08/07/2013

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MANDATE

The Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission of The Presbytery of Elizabeth

An Administrative Commission named the **Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission** (DPRC) shall be established as a Standing Commission of the Presbytery of Elizabeth for the primary purpose of responding swiftly and expeditiously with flexibility in situations of emergency and natural or man-made disasters.

The Commission's primary responsibility shall be to support the efforts of congregations as they respond to the needs of Parish and Community. Only under unusual circumstances shall the Commission act on the Presbytery's behalf as the primary agent of mission. Such a commission is permitted in the Form of Government, G-3.0109, and shall be organized in accordance with G-3.0109b, and shall report in accordance with G-3.0109b.

The Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission shall assess the needs resulting from a disaster and the resources of Presbyterian Congregations within the area of such disaster, as well as, the additional resources available within the Presbytery and among the various other Presbyterian congregations, by working with the Pastors and/or the Clerks of Session. The Commission shall also plan, consult, and coordinate with Local and State Government Agencies, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), the Red Cross, United Way and other Non-profit Organizations.

The Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission, in cooperation with Outreach & Social Concerns Unit (OSCU), shall be responsible for coordinating advance preparedness planning and training for congregations and church members. The Commission shall advise Sessions, through the Pastor and the Clerk of Session, of specific ways that their congregation may participate with their local municipality and county government as well as other agencies in being

prepared for emergencies. Becoming identified as an available voluntary organization and receiving the necessary training is essential for meaningful participation.

Unprepared and untrained well-meaning persons are often in-the-way rather than helpful in emergencies. The Commission shall work with congregations so that they understand their responsibility and role in the process of recovering from disaster.

The Commission shall have power to request, receive, deposit and distribute funds through the Treasurer of the Presbytery. The Commission shall respond expeditiously by planning and working cooperatively while keeping in mind the sources of funding and the intentions of donors. The Commission may choose to work ecumenically, pooling available funds and resources, but shall retain accountability and responsibility for reporting. Signatures of both the Chair of the Commission and the Executive Presbyter, or their designees, shall be required for the expenditure of all funds. The Commission shall report all such actions to the Presbytery through the Stated Clerk who shall report to Cabinet and the Presbytery.

The Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission shall be composed of a minimum of seven (7) persons elected by the Presbytery including the Presbytery Executive (or designee), the President of the Presbytery Trustees (or designee) and other persons with some experience in responding to disasters. The Commission may also co-opt additional members.

The Commission shall report annually to Presbytery.

SECTION 1

Preparing for a Disaster

A. Introduction

Disasters play no favorites! Neither the kind, the severity, the property damage caused, the injuries incurred, the number of lives interrupted – none of the above is predictable. One might easily ask the question, “Then, how can you prepare for the unexpected?” The answer is that you can do plenty to prepare for a disaster with the expectation that you can lessen the potential number of injuries or the extent of the property damage or the cost of the aftermath. The intent of this section is to give some very basic recommendations to church leaders to prepare for and to cope with natural disasters when they strike.

B. General Preparedness

It is incumbent on all churches and congregations to have trained individuals, with specific responsibilities clearly understood, to respond efficiently and expeditiously to disasters when they occur. There is no substitute for adequately trained personnel. Having a Disaster Plan in place is vital as well with persons knowledgeable in how to execute the plan. Consider the following as a basic “ready Checklist” for most churches and congregations:

Know what emergencies or disasters are most likely to occur in the area.

Have a Church Disaster Plan in place and practice it!

(see Paragraph C).

Have specific persons identified and trained in specific responsibilities, including basics such as CPR/AED.

Keep / store a minimum amount of emergency supplies on hand – water, flashlights, etc., in the church.

Know who to call for help. Keep emergency telephone numbers available and/or posted (see Paragraph C, Step Two)

Establish a chain of command with all appropriate communication information for each person – cell phone numbers, email address, etc.

C. Disaster Plan Template for Congregations

The following is a guide to help congregations prepare for disaster response in their church or local community. It consists of steps that can be accomplished in sequence or concurrently by a group involved in planning. The guide breaks the many important step of disaster planning into smaller, more manageable tasks. It covers many, but not all, of the topics that should be considered in making a church disaster plan. Each congregation's needs are unique and, therefore, "one size will not fit all." For example, some churches may have nursery school or after-school care programs in their buildings. The important point here is that a plan is only as good as the people executing it. There is no substitute for well-trained personnel with full knowledge of what to do when disaster strikes.

The recommended Six-Step Template is included at the end of this section. The major steps are as follows:

- Step One Initial Planning
- Step Two Create an Organizational Structure
- Step Three Securing Resources and Building or Property
- Step Four Identifying Community Resources
- Step Five Developing Contingency Plans
- Step Six Develop a Congregational Communication Plan

No one step is more important than another, and no one overall plan will solve all of the problems. Once a plan is developed, however, practicing that plan becomes a paramount objective.

Partnering with other churches in the area, in terms of both human and material resources, should be given serious consideration. Pooling efforts can be advantageous to all.

D. Training Resources

The principal resource for disaster preparedness training is the American Red Cross. With years of experience, dealing with all kinds of man-made and natural disasters, the Red Cross has developed a number of training programs and related materials unique to the preparation for, dealing with, and coping with the aftermath of fires, floods, tornados, earthquakes, thunderstorms, etc. Attending courses, gathering a plethora of written materials, and requesting in-house training – all can be accomplished through the local Red Cross. It is incumbent upon each church in the Presbytery of Elizabeth to identify and be in contact with the American Red Cross chapter covering their town or city.

Church leaders can also encourage individual members to take preparedness steps in their own homes. Again, the Red Cross has training courses and materials applicable to homeowners, such as how to put together a family disaster plan, a fire prevention and safety checklist, flood safety checklist, and much more. See Exhibits A, B, and C at the end of this section. These are only a few samples of available documents. There is also information on what to do during power outages, thunderstorms, winter storms, etc.

Sample Planning Guide for a Church Disaster Response

This is a guide to help congregations prepare for disaster response in their church or local community. It consists of steps that can be accomplished in sequence or concurrently by a group involved in planning. The guide breaks the many important steps of disaster planning into smaller more manageable blocks. It covers many, but not all, of the topics that should be considered in making your church plan. Adapt this list to meet the unique needs of your congregation.

A church member emergency contact information form is included.

This checklist was adapted from:

AT THE HEART OF THE STORM

Lessons learned from the Bush Disaster Recovery Foundation

Sponsored by: Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and the Bush Foundation

<http://www.smifoundation.org/Disaster%20Recovery.pdf>

STEP ONE: INITIAL PLANNING

Task
Determine each staff member's personal scenario and discuss how they might be impacted in a disaster
Plan for varying effects of disaster depending on time of day it occurs.

Back up of Documents and Off-site Storage. Put the following documentation together, make copies and distribute to designated people in your organization. Have a copy in the office and several copies off-site. Create a **GO BOX**.

Documents	Backed Up	In GO BOX
Insurance policy, insurance binder, insurance agent's name and contact numbers		
Insurance company's contact numbers		
Inventory of equipment, furniture, fixtures and manuals, warranties, supplies.		
Presbytery, Mission Community, congregation contacts and essential written and computer records		
Member directory		
Up to date copy of this worksheet.		
Historic documents		
Tax Exemption certificate with ID number		
Up-to-date brochures and literature		
List of all places where copies of all pertinent information is housed		
Where is the GO BOX		
Who is responsible for the GO BOX?		

Preparation for Disaster Kits:

Contents	Location
Personal Hygiene Kits	
Shelter Kits	
School Kits	
Flood Cleanup Kits	

Emergency Equipment List – In house (church) and membership

Equipment	Resource	Address	Phone

STEP TWO - CREATE AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Position	Name	Contact Numbers	Responsibilities
Team Leader			
1st Back up			
2nd Back up			

Position	Name	Contact Numbers	Responsibilities
Operations			
1st Back up			
2nd Back up			

Position	Name	Contact Numbers	Responsibilities
Logistics			
1st Back up			
2nd Back up			

Position	Name	Contact Numbers	Responsibilities
Finance			
1st Back up			
2nd Back up			

Position	Name	Contact Numbers	Responsibilities
Communications			
1st Back up			
2nd Back up			

Related Tasks

Name a staff member to each position	
Meet to determine how team will operate	

Create an Emergency Portfolio with the following content. Keep a current copy in the GO BOX and in an off site location.

Chain of command worksheet	
Staff roster including home addresses, home phone numbers, cell phone numbers, pager numbers, email addresses and out of town contacts.	
Church Leadership contact information as above	
Church Membership contact information as above	
Emergency equipment resource list	
Non-profit status and Tax Identification Number	
Insurance documentation	

Emergency contact numbers

	Contact	Phone
Ambulance		
Animal Control		
Attorney		
Electrician		
Fire department		
Glass company		
In-house security		
Insurance company		
Locksmith		
Maintenance company		
Plumber		
Police or sheriff		

Utility companies:

Electric	
Gas	
Telephone	
Water	
Computer technician	
Other	

Roster of area response agencies

911 NON-Emergency Number	
Emergency Management Office	
Red Cross	
Interpreter(s)	
Others	

STEP THREE: SECURING RESOURCES AND BUILDING

Consider who should have this information and train all appropriate people. Designate Primary and Back up responsibility.

Task	Whose Responsibility	Back Up
Learn how to shut off main electric power		
Learn how to shut of power to the sanctuary		
Learn how to shut of power to other buildings		
Learn how to shut of main water supply		
Learn how to shut of other buildings' water		

Consider	Whose Responsibility
Identify sources for emergency generators	
Identify location(s) of nearest pay phones:	
Place multiples of correct change and/or phone cards in emergency kits	
Secure emergency bottled or other viable drinking water	
Plan for how interruption of normal transportation will affect Church operations.	
Consider needs for additional resources staff, materials and funding and sources of	
Identify a Reconstruction source	

STEP FOUR: IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Meet with Emergency Management Services director	
Review Emergency Operations. Plan as it impacts agency.	
Make Emergency Management Service director aware of role Church resources can play in a disaster	
Leave Church contact information with director.	
Locate potential sites for public care.	
Locate potential site(s) for Emergency Operations Center.	
Contact like agencies to determine their level of disaster preparedness.	
Discuss potential collaborating or mutual aid with other churches and non-profits.	
Visit appropriate businesses and organizations to make them aware of agency and determine possibilities for mutual aid and record findings.	
Consider potential need for interpreters and identify availability of such within community.	
Contact other response agencies as necessary, i.e. police, fire, public health, etc.	

STEP FIVE: DEVELOPING CONTINGENCY PLANS

Brainstorm with full staff and Session on all possible "what if" scenarios	
Discuss possible unique area problem	
Flood	
Hurricane remnant	
Church fire	
Chemical accident	
School violence	
Severe storm	
Key Personnel major illness/death	
Leadership Crisis	
Impact of evacuation of nearby metro areas	
Document and rehearse final plan.	
Determine ways to keep your information accurate and current	

STEP SIX: DEVELOP A CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNICATION PLAN

Survey the congregation for individual preparedness plans	
Gather contact information including out-of area contacts from members	
Identify at-risk members of the congregation who may need assistance (elderly, disabled, single parents of small children)	
Assign someone responsibility to check on and/or assist at-risk individuals.	
Consider establishing neighborhood or community groupings of members for follow-up and spiritual care	

Name of your Church
Emergency Information Form

FOR THE FAMILY OF: _____

PRIMARY FAMILY ADDRESS: _____

INDIVIDUAL FAMILY MEMBERS NAMES AND NUMBERS

NAME: _____ CELL #(____) _____ EMAIL _____

NAME: _____ CELL #(____) _____ EMAIL _____

NAME: _____ CELL #(____) _____ EMAIL _____

NAME: _____ CELL #(____) _____ EMAIL _____

NAME: _____ CELL #(____) _____ EMAIL _____

NAME: _____ CELL #(____) _____ EMAIL _____

EVACUATION DESTINATION

EVACUATION/REGROUPING LOCATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY _____ STATE _____

PHONE NUMBER AT THAT LOCATION: (____) _____

ICE NUMBERS (In case of Emergency)

Program into your cell phone, as ICE –1 and ICE –2 so emergency personnel reading your phone know whom to contact

1st Out-of-area contact	# 2nd Out-of-area contact #
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Home Phone:	Home Phone:
Work Phone:	Work Phone:
Cell Phone:	Cell Phone:
Email:	Email:

ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE CHURCH STAFF

This form will be used by church staff only in the event of an emergency

SECTION 2

Compassion Care Response

Part 1 - Overview and Goals

A – Rationale

Spirituality is an essential part of humanity. Disaster disrupts people’s spiritual lives significantly. Nurturing people’s spiritual needs contributes to holistic healing. Everyone benefits from Spiritual Care in times of disaster.¹ In disaster, anything that nurtures the human spirit as a source of strength in coping with the crisis is Spiritual Care. Sometimes Spiritual Care is an activity or gesture which may not be performed with the direct intention of providing Spiritual Care, but which nonetheless results in a bolstering and nurturing of the Spirit.²

While immediate disaster response periods can be counted in terms of hours, days, and even weeks, pastors and congregations providing Compassion Care (Pastoral Care and Mental Health Care) can quickly become overwhelmed and “burned out” when the demands placed upon them remain at an intense level and continue uninterrupted over a period of a week to several months. It is at this time that the compassion caregiver becomes no longer effective, depressed, and even emotionally and spiritually paralyzed. This can be true for an individual, as well as for a church session or congregation.

The Compassion Care Response Team (or “CCRT”) will be responsible for rendering appropriate support and service to the compassion caregiver(s) when it is deemed necessary. Such support will include counseling for the compassion caregiver(s), provide respite for the caregiver(s), work alongside the caregivers - for a period deemed appropriate – in order to provide support and additional resource in compassion care-giving, and guide the caregiver’s journey toward restored spiritual and emotional health.

¹ *Light Our Way: A Guide For Spiritual Care In Times Of Disaster for Disaster Response Volunteers, First Responders and Disaster Planners*, 1st edition revised, 2006 National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD), p. 1 or www.NVOAD.org

² *Ibid.*, p. 12 & 13

B - Team Composition and Selection

The CCRT will be comprised of Teaching Elders/Ministers and laypersons from the Presbytery of Elizabeth who have been trained in addressing pastoral care and mental health issues of pastors and congregations who are struggling to cope with the trauma and stress associated with “caregiver compassion burnout” (becoming overwhelmed and unable to continue providing appropriate response and support to individuals experiencing crisis situations in the home, the congregation, or the community).

The CCRT Coordinator of the Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission will poll the member congregations and members of the Presbytery of Elizabeth to ascertain the names of individuals with appropriate skill sets, as well as their willingness to serve. These skill sets will include, but not be limited to, training and experience in: Pastoral Care and Counseling, Grief/Bereavement Counseling, Stress Management, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Spiritual/Emotional Exhaustion.

The results of this poll will be entered into a database maintained by the CCRT which will be stored on at least two flash drives: (#1) kept in the possession of the CCRT Coordinator, and (#2) stored at the Presbytery Office. This information will be updated at least annually.

Once formed, the CCRT will meet at least annually to become more familiar with other members of the Team, review and update triage protocol, and to discuss the various skill sets represented by Team members. Due to the fluid nature of the membership of Elizabeth Presbytery (and of its member congregations), these annual meetings will serve to keep the Team membership united and focused on their task and the outcomes of CCRT interaction in disaster (and post-disaster) situations.

C – Timeliness of Response

This CCRT will provide a support system for the pastor, the Session, and/or the congregation that will serve as counselor/resource when deemed appropriate. The CCRT’s response will be provided within forty-eight (48) hours of the determination of need. Such determination will be the result of any of the following:

- Self-referral to the Team coordinator by the pastor, the pastor's spouse, or by another immediate family member (child or sibling), or
- Self-referral by the Session of the affected congregation, or
- Assessment by the Team Coordinator upon receipt of a referral from the Presbytery Executive (or designee), or
- Assessment by the CCRT Coordinator upon inquiry and consultation with the pastor and/or clerk of session of the affected congregation.

D – Reporting

While confidentiality between CCRT member(s) and pastor (or Session members) must be honored, a generalized report will be made by the Team member(s) to the Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission. This report will contain information regarding the nature of support provided (i.e., counseling, referral to local provider or agency, redirecting efforts), the timely fashion in which such support has been provided, and the date (anticipated or actual) when such support is no longer deemed necessary.

Part 2: Possible Scenarios for Pastoral Care Preparedness

Introduction

To wait until a tragedy takes place before learning how to provide Pastoral Care/Compassion Care not only delays the care you may give, but also provides the possibility of creating more pain and problems for the very people you are attempting to help. Having people in the local congregation who are aware of possible needs - and who have received at least a modicum of training in how to meet those needs – is a blessing to more than just the victims of the tragedy. It is also a blessing to the congregation, to the community, and to Christ’s Kingdom.

When willing individuals have received at least some Pastoral Care training they are able to provide a greater extent of care and be less likely to be overwhelmed within the first few days following the event.

The Session of the congregation should establish a means by which Pastoral Care/Compassion Care individuals should be selected, receive training, be recognized, organized, and contacted in the event of an emergency.

What follows are possible scenarios of emergency situations in which Pastoral Care/Compassion Care is critical and how being prepared will provide a more successful ministry to members of the community.

A – Flood, Fire, Wind or Earthquake Emergency

In the event of a flood striking the community, a major fire displacing the residents of an apartment building, a tornado or hurricane shattering homes and lives, or an earthquake shaking the surrounding community to its foundations, the local church sessions and pastors need to be prepared to provide shelter for displaced victims, when possible. Such preparedness can be orchestrated through the American Red Cross and the Disaster Preparedness Office of the local municipal government. However, the Pastoral Care of these displaced persons goes beyond a safe, dry place to sleep and food in their stomachs. The pastor, Session, Deacons, and members of the hosting congregation also need to be prepared to provide emotional and spiritual comfort, prayerful support, counsel, and hope for despairing people.

Such Pastoral Care does not always miraculously appear. Compassion can drown in the wake of various agency interventions, necessary documentation and paperwork, and the number of people experiencing similar pain and frustration.

While the pastor may be trained in crisis counseling, this pastor will soon “burn out” if attempting to be a “one person response team” to provide such care to all the victims housed in the building. The American Red Cross and other local agencies may provide some assistance, but all too often their resources are spread desperately thin in such situations.

Therefore, it is beneficial for individual Elders, Deacons, and Members to have some training or experience in providing pastoral care. The Pastoral Care Offices of local hospitals often provide a community service of “in-service training” for people visiting patients in their facilities. Such training can easily be adjusted to begin addressing the needs of those displaced by a flood and provide a calming comfort in the midst of a storm. Having several people within the congregation who have received such training can be a rich blessing to the congregation and to their “guests” when a tragedy occurs.

B – Gun Violence in the Community

Sadly, it is a sign of our times that gunshots ring out in many communities. Some are related to street violence, gang involvement, retribution for bullying, or racial/ethnic tensions. Whether it is a single victim on the street or dozens of victims in a local school, the community experiences shock, fear, anger, and seldom unites in a calm, united attempt to prevent such tragedy.

When representatives of the faith community join efforts with other community leaders to establish a proactive (rather than reactive) plan to address these possibilities, the community is stronger and better able to care for the needs of its membership. Every community has its individuality and operates differently from its neighbors, but the need exists in every community.

Local city or county law enforcement agencies are willing to provide “seminars” to community organizations regarding what to look for when observing questionable activity, who to contact when concerned about suspicious activity, and how to offer “safe haven” to those who may feel threatened.

The Church cannot remain aloof from the conditions on the streets. Sooner or later, such a congregation (or its membership) becomes victimized. However, by partnering with other faith-based organizations and community agencies in the construction of programs, activities, and protocol to address situations before they become critical, such Pastoral/Spiritual Care serves to strengthen individual resolve against violence by those who may be given to such response. Likewise, as an immediate response when such tragedies occur, such Pastoral/Spiritual Care involvement provides a broader base of resources, demonstrates a united front, and facilitates a more effective healing process for the community.

C – Act(s) of Terror within the community

While it is impossible to totally prevent Acts of Terror within our communities, it is possible to be aware and to prepare ourselves with a response plan, in the event such an act occurs. |

As our nation has experienced, Acts of Terror are as varied as the people who perpetrate them. They can include (but are not limited to) car bombs, crashing jetliners into buildings, poison powders in envelopes sent through the U.S. Postal Service, poisoning water supplies, and the taking of hostages.

Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies work diligently to detect possible situations before they occur. The general public (every citizen) is encouraged to be observant in all aspects of their travels: work, pleasure, and general. However infrequent, these acts still occur. |

Every congregation and Session should have an established plan in place, in the event such an act takes place within their building or community they serve: a hostage situation involving a church-housed nursery school or during a service of worship, community water supply being poisoned, etc.

Many civic groups and agencies provide “How To” seminars to prepare individuals and organizations in their response to such acts. The Session acting responsibly would do well to host such a seminar in their church, inviting the entire community to attend.

Part 3: Possible Scenarios for Pastoral Care Response from the Presbytery Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission

A- Flood, Fire, Wind or Earthquake Emergency

The day-to-day Pastoral/Compassion Care required by a pastor, a Session, or other members of any congregation following a natural disaster such as fire, flood, hurricane, tornado, or earthquake can - and will - quickly deplete the emotional, spiritual, and physical energies of the caregivers. This is known as “Compassion Fatigue.” Providing respite for those serving the victims in such a way is crucial to the well being of the caregiver and to the recovery of the community.

The Presbytery Executive and/or the CCRT Coordinator shall make an assessment of need within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving a report of the disaster. Such receipt shall be by television, radio, or Internet reports, by telephone call from a pastor, Clerk of Session, or designee of a congregation within the affected area, by a representative of the American Red Cross Response Team, or by a representative of a municipal or other local government agency within the affected area.

The assessment by the Presbytery Executive and/or the CCRT Coordinator shall take no more than eight (8) hours. At the conclusion of the assessment, the Team shall develop a plan of assistance specific to the needs of the situation. Said “Plan” being developed, the Team members will contact those individuals from the database (Section #1, Item D – Team Member Selection) specifically trained/experienced in the required areas of response. The Team may also request the assistance of the Presbyterian Disaster Response Team of the Presbytery or the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Presbytery of Elizabeth’s (or combined) Response Team will establish an appropriate size and number of response groups with specific instructions to:

- 1 Relieve a pre-determined number of “first response” caregivers in order for them to receive appropriate respite and debriefing, and

- 2 Provide those on such respite with at least twenty-four (24) hours away from the immediate situation, debriefing of their experience and reflection upon the nature of the needs still to be addressed, as well as appropriate crisis counseling specific to the needs of the individual.

With the assistance of the Presbyterian Disaster Response Team, the combined efforts of the Teams' intervention may result in rotating response groups over a period of six (6) months or more, depending upon the nature of the disaster.

B – Gun Violence in the Community

The first response to such an event always involves the local congregation through its pastor(s) and Session. Providing pastoral care to the families of the victimized is "Step #1." Most frequently, within the bounds of Elizabeth Presbytery, Step #2 involves a community meeting that includes the mayor, members of city council, law enforcement agencies, and other civic organizations. (This meeting will be held as soon after the event as possible; often on the evening of the funeral of one of the victims.)

Because the pastor(s) and Session, and representatives of other houses of worship, are focused on the immediate needs of the victims and their families, and because the discussion taking place in the meeting involves their specific community, it falls to the CCRT to facilitate the involvement of the community members in various elements of change. In this role, it becomes the responsibility (if consent is given by the local authorities) to provide a means for concerned citizens to become involved in an appropriate response. Such involvement and response would include providing stations/staffed tables in a separate room from the meeting (but within the same building) for people to sign up as volunteers for: a Community/Neighborhood Watch program, a Community Hotline/Call Center to address non-emergency matters, and other such programs as may be deemed appropriate (in consultation with local law enforcement and pastors).

It may become the responsibility of the CCRT to provide initial pastoral care training for those volunteers involved in the Hotline/Call Center.

C – Act(s) of Terror within the community

The events of (and following) September 11, 2001 taught us the need for long-term pastoral care for the first responder caregivers. Such trauma to a congregation and a community extends beyond the time frame experienced as a result of any “natural disaster.” Likewise, the pastoral care/mental health response protocol is different than that following a natural disaster of fire, flood, wind or earthquake.

The pastor(s) and Session members suffer more immediate trauma, themselves, in such situations. In the case of a natural disaster, the need is specific: food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and counseling for bereavement, fear, anger, depression and frustration. Resulting from an act of terror, the needs also includes counseling for personal and communal outrage, the desire for vengeance, and the knee-jerk impulse to form vigilante groups.

While diligence and observation are important key elements in apprehending criminals, vigilante groups often target individuals who may fit a certain profile but who are, indeed, innocent victims, themselves.

Individuals affected by their own personal trauma and emotional responses make poor facilitators/counselors for the calming presence needed at this time.

The Presbytery Executive and/or the Coordinator of the CCRT will assess specific needs of the affected community through personal observation and interview with the pastor(s) and Session(s) within the community. Such assessment will take place within four (4) hours of being permitted to enter the affected area. Upon completion of the assessment, the Team shall develop a plan of assistance specific to the needs of the situation. Said “Plan” being developed, the Team members will contact those individuals from the CCRT database of people in the presbytery who are skilled in addressing the specific areas of need.

In addition, due to media response to such (an) event(s), office staff of the affected congregation(s) may also need specific support as they respond to the inundating wave of telephone calls and preparations related to any related memorial service(s). Session Personnel Committees may need guidance as to how to care for the needs of church support staff who are often “running on empty” after only a very few hours following the event. CCRT’s presence is often required to enable a calm and effective response in a time of chaos.

SECTION 3

Trustees and Church Property

Being Prepared

Basic preparedness is the first step that all of the churches and other entities within our Presbytery can and should have in place at all times. It is critical that these items be put into place as soon as possible:

- Review Insurance Policies to assure that the replacement values of your buildings and furnishings, fixed items (such as the pipe organ and other assets) are covered
- Review all leases to assure that both you and those leasing your facilities are anticipating likely disasters such as fire, flood and the like. Leasees are to be apprised of this plan and are to prepare their own contact lists, asset lists and assurance that their insurance policies cover their potential losses.
- Establish and maintain an emergency call list indicating those with primary, secondary, etc., responsibility. Be sure that the Presbytery has a copy of the list.
- Establish and maintain a list of the local emergency services with their contact information and assure that those with responsibilities as noted above receive copies for their use at home in the event that the church is inaccessible.
- Be aware that the Presbytery contact information should be included since Presbytery may be able to direct needs for assistance to those who can help.
- In the event a disaster impacts your church buildings or property immediately contact the President of the Presbytery Trustees and the Presbytery Disaster Response Team.

SECTION 4

Presbytery Office Disaster Plan

I. Introduction

This plan is an appendix of a set of disaster preparedness and response plans developed within the Presbytery of Elizabeth. The Overview section discusses the background, rationale, and scope of preparedness and response plans being developed in the Presbytery.

This appendix outlines the beginning disaster plans for the administrative functions and the Presbytery facility. The plan covers two scenarios:

- Using the Presbytery Office as a shelter, work camps, or material distribution site; and
- Protecting Presbytery resources and developing contingency operating and staffing plans

II. Scenario A – Using the Presbytery Center as a facility for Outreach

A. Conduct a site review to determine changes needed to function as work camp.

- Well? Other fresh water source(s)?
- Outside water hookups
- Generator/fuel
- Outside electrical hookups

B. Determine supplies needed to use facility as a temporary shelter.

- Cots/blankets
- Non-perishable foods
- Toiletries/hygiene

III. Scenario B – Ensuring continuing function of Presbytery Office

A. Develop Memoranda of Understanding with several churches/entities for temporary housing of the Presbytery Office.

B. Develop contingency staffing plans.

C. Create a disaster “Go Box” containing:

- Current Directory
- Hard copy of Presbytery Manual
- Copy of Presbytery Disaster Response Plan
- Community emergency contacts
- Current Planning Calendar
- Official copy of the property deed
- List of credit card numbers and holders
- Account numbers and contact information for all bank accounts
- Copy of insurance policy
- Copy of PDA Memorandum of Understanding
- Complete computer record backup (flash drives)
- Presbytery stationery/stamps
- Business cards for all Presbytery staff
- Memoranda of Understanding for temporary housing of Presbytery Office
- Contingency staffing plan
- *Book of Order/The Book of Confessions*
- *Book of Common Worship*
- Hymnal
- Bible

D. Secure equipment:

- Four laptop computers (at least one capable of reading backup flash drives)
- Four cell phones
- One satellite phone?
- One fax machine?
- Copier?
- Surge protectors

E. Other considerations:

- Records preservation
- Evacuation plan
- Severe storm shelter
- Plan for sheltering in place

SECTION 5

Church-based Community Response Plan

Churches, like towns, states and families should have emergency plans that can be efficiently put into operation in the time of natural disasters or in emergency cases when at least two churches within the Presbytery of Elizabeth deem immediate action is necessary to assist those who have been affected by events within their community. There are two components that are absolutely necessary for emergency response to be effective. The first is a workable plan that is simple enough in nature, yet encompassing enough to be effective. The second is a reliable and well documented method of communication between all of the churches within the Presbytery and amongst the other assisting agencies and organizations. This document will serve as an outline and guide for such a system.

All disasters or emergencies, no matter how different or similar they may be require both a short term response for immediate relief and a long term action plan for sustained recovery. For our purposes, a short term response plan for immediate relief would include actions that need to be done within the first week or two after the disaster or emergency. Long term action plans would be for an indefinite period after the initial two week period.

SHORT TERM RESPONSE

As previously mentioned, a disaster/emergency is defined when at least two churches and their communities are affected. The first response over the first few days will always be the work of the local authorities, in conjunction with any other state agencies or relief organizations that are called in to handle immediate needs. After activity returns to a bit of normalcy, the short term response, needs assessment portion of the plan should begin to take place. Every church should have developed an emergency contact list. **IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT EVERY CHURCH HAVE A DESIGNATED CONTACT PERSON/DESIGNATED COORDINATOR.** The Pastors and Deacons will need to coordinate the emotional healing that is

necessary. At all times, communication should be maintained with the Presbytery office.

LONG TERM RESPONSE

Once the immediate needs have been met, the second portion of the Response Plan, the long term response, needs to be put into place. While the Clerk of Session should still be the center of communication, the President of the Board of Trustees, or if a unicameral Session exists, the individual in charge of Building and Grounds, or their designate should be the coordinator of the Long Term Response Plan. Each Congregation should have in place a Disaster Recovery Team, with the above named coordinator as the lead. The Disaster Recovery Team should maintain contact with the Presbytery Disaster Preparedness and Response Team and also, if necessary, the National Response Team of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) to assist with damage assessment and planning. All of these activities should include communication with local, state & federal agencies as necessary, communication with local, state & federal relief agencies and communication with other churches within the Presbytery and the Presbytery Office.

When Long Term Response planning is being discussed, three other important considerations need to be addressed: the availability of immediate money, the availability of volunteers and discussing the possible creation of a formal (incorporated) or informal organization to coordinate relief efforts in the case of a major disaster.

MONEY

In most instances when natural disasters occur, money will be available from a combination of local, state or federal agencies. On the other hand, it may take days, weeks or even months for these funds to find their way into the hands of the people that need them the most. Until these monies are released, churches must know where funds can be accessed immediately in order to provide food, shelter and other necessities for those in need. Plans should be in place to access monetary support in two ways. The first is through fundraising within the congregation and the community. The second is through local agencies that have may have designated funds available for such emergencies. Examples of these

agencies are the United Way, Catholic Charities, the American Red Cross, the local Food Bank and the Salvation Army. Lists should be available in the individual churches with the names of the organizations, key contact persons, phone numbers and email addresses.

VOLUNTEERS

Community volunteers are the lifeblood of any emergency response plan. In many disaster situations, the local police, fire and first aid squad may become either stretched to the limit to handle the immediate needs or become inoperable themselves. When such situations occur, organizers must know what other organizations are available to assist and how to contact them. Examples of these organizations are the local Boy Scout Troops, Explorer Posts, Jaycees, Parent-Teacher Associations or other groups that have lists of their member's names, phone numbers and email addresses at their disposal which can be activated at a moment's notice. Volunteers also must be capable of knowing how to organize and work with other churches in their community and surrounding communities.

CREATION OF A FORMAL/INFORMAL RELIEF ORGANIZATION

While the availability of local money and local volunteers should suffice to handle many of the emergencies that occur, over the long term, relief efforts may become more effective when a formal organization exists to take over the long term planning and responsibilities.

SECTION 6

Volunteers and Donations

Responding to Local, National and International Disasters

When a disaster strikes within the bounds of the presbytery, congregations are urged to consider receiving an offering to support the affected communities and congregations. Contributions should be sent to the presbytery treasurer, who will place them in account dedicated to respond to that disaster. Once a response process has been created, all funds will be released to support recovery efforts in the affected communities.

Those communities may call for volunteers, usually through the voice of one or more of the churches of the presbytery. Or people from congregations may step forward offering to volunteer. Potential volunteers should contact the pastor of one of the congregations in the affected communities or contact the DPRT to determine how they can be helpful.

If individuals or teams feel called to volunteer in response to disasters in other parts of the United States, they can contact the Presbyterian Call Center at 866-732-6121 to make arrangements for service.

When major disasters occur in the US or in other countries, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) often issues an appeal for contributions to respond to the disaster through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). Congregations should consider receiving an offering shortly after the event when the devastation is fresh in the consciousness of church members. Funds can be forwarded through the Presbytery or directly to PDA.