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SEND TO FRIEND



Lamplight

A Newsletter of the US Disaster Program



"Be dressed, ready for service and keep your lamps burning." — LUKE 12:35

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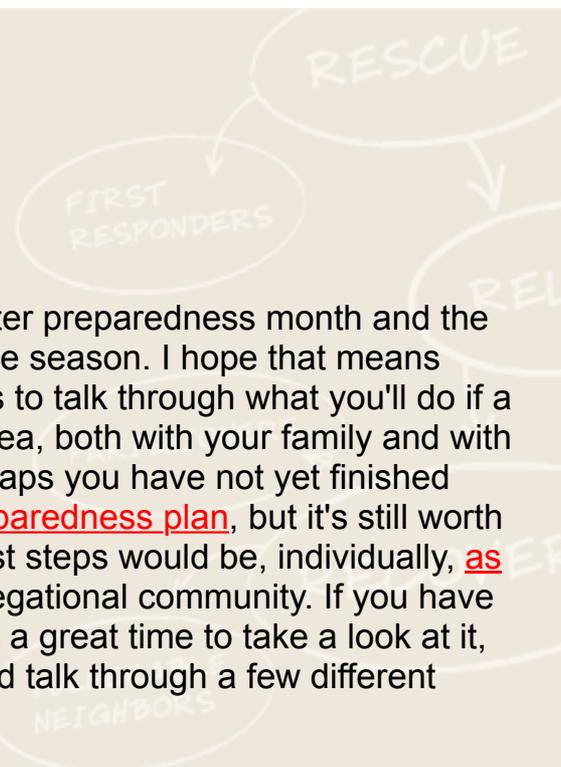
A Note from Katie

Hello everyone,

September brings disaster preparedness month and the mid-point in the hurricane season. I hope that means you'll take a few minutes to talk through what you'll do if a disaster impacts your area, both with your family and with your congregation. Perhaps you have not yet finished your [parish disaster preparedness plan](#), but it's still worth discussing what your first steps would be, individually, [as a family](#) and as a congregational community. If you have completed a plan, this is a great time to take a look at it, update as necessary and talk through a few different disaster scenarios.

We hope the materials we've gathered in the [Resource Library](#) are helpful in this effort, and please let us know if there's anything else we can do to help your congregation get ready for this important work.

Peace,
Katie



In this Issue:

[Diocese of Los Angeles: Offering Worship When All is Not Normal](#)

News:

[Episcopal Church Foundation features parish disaster preparedness stories on its Vital Posts blog](#)

During the month of September, the [Episcopal Church Foundation](#) is featuring a weekly blog entry on parish disaster preparedness from Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program. Visit the [Vital Posts blog](#) to read stories of parishes that have developed

Post-Disaster Liturgy: Offering Worship When All is Not Normal

When the Episcopal Church of the Ascension was damaged by the Sierra Madre Earthquake in 1991, the rector, The Very Rev. Canon Michael Bamberger, made several adjustments to continue offering services until the church was repaired. Below are his reflections and suggestions on how to maintain liturgy after a disaster.

It's always bad news when they name an earthquake after your town. On Friday, June 28th, 1991 Sierra Madre, California was the epicenter of a 6.0 magnitude earthquake. There was one fatality and many injuries. Among the many buildings affected or destroyed, the Episcopal Church of the Ascension was badly damaged.

The next Sunday, the congregation gathered for worship outside on a playing field. By the following Sunday, the Parish Hall had been inspected and repaired enough for safe occupancy, and for the next nine months, this was the worship space while the historic building was restored.

Ironically, on Sunday, June 28th, 1992 the congregation experienced the powerful Landers earthquake during the early service. It provided an excellent reminder about congregational preparedness.

The following are tips on offering worship "when all is not normal."

Communicate that worship will happen

Reinstate regular Sunday worship as soon you can, even if it's in an alternate location. Announce that worship will happen and when and where it will be. Some congregations have pre-identified a back-up site in their preparedness plan. If evacuation orders are in place, it is advisable to consult with local law enforcement authorities about access issues.

Respect vulnerability and provide for safe worship

Folks may have been traumatized even if they had no property damage. They may be grieving for any number of reasons. Be sure that the space you choose for worship is safe. This may mean having building inspectors assess the structural integrity of the space where which worship will be held. And be attentive to the need for emotional "safe space."

Celebrate and mourn

Worship after a disaster celebrates survival and resiliency and holds up those who helped. But it also acknowledges loss, uncertainty, and fear. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, people often find comfort in worship that seems familiar. *A Public Service for Healing* from the *Book of Occasional Services*, as well as materials from *Enriching*

preparedness plans and used them in disasters.

Join "Ready to Serve"

Offer your services to your vulnerable neighbors after a disaster. [Sign up here](#) to be called upon to volunteer.

Current Disaster Response Projects:

Tornado Response Diocese of Oklahoma

Volunteer Opportunities:

Diocese of Bethlehem

Volunteer opportunities include indoor and outdoor repair of flood-damaged homes in the diocese of Bethlehem, PA. Contact [Rev. John Major](#) for information on how to sign up.

Dioceses of Easton, New Jersey, New York

Volunteer information and registration for Hurricane Sandy-impacted areas [now online](#).

Current Disaster Recovery Projects:

[HELP NOW!](#)

Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem

Trinity Episcopal Church in West Pittston is working with ecumenical partners in Northeast Pennsylvania to support neighbors affected by flooding as a result of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee in September 2011.

Episcopal Diocese of Easton

The Diocese of Easton is hosting volunteer groups to repair homes damaged by Hurricane Sandy and construct new ones where existing homes cannot be repaired.

Jericho Road

A neighborhood-based, home-building organization is working to revitalize Central City, a New Orleans neighborhood recovering from Hurricane Katrina and decades of disinvestment.

Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana

Case managers are supporting affected communities as they adapt to the financial, emotional and social changes caused by Hurricane Isaac and the oil spill.

Our Worship, can be easily adapted to speak to the needs of the congregation.

At the same time, it is critical that church leaders proclaim the Resurrection. Without being Pollyanna-ish, believe that recovery will be achieved. And when that seems impossible, remember the phrase from the 12 Step Movement - "Fake it 'til you make it."

Be ready for newcomers

In the wake of a disaster, people often seek out community. Whatever the reasons that may draw visitors and newcomers, a disaster can be an opportunity to welcome and embrace new members. In addition to planning for more people in the pews, be ready to provide extra fellowship, as well, in the form of coffee hours and church potlucks. People need to gather, be nourished, and share their stories and hear the stories of others.

Worship and preach to the emotional life-cycle of a disaster

Some disasters are short-lived, and some take a long time for the "new normal" to emerge. Church leaders must attempt to be attuned to the emotional and spiritual condition of congregants, the congregation a whole, and the community at large. The first heroic days of disaster response often give way to a downward slide of disillusionment for those who must deal with displacement, lost income and ongoing uncertainty.

It is appropriate to address people's frustration and exhaustion. Anticipating when longings will be at odds with reality will be helpful. For example, having to hold Christmas worship in another venue because the familiar space has not been restored may re-open a sense of grief.

It is also critical to remember that life events continue to happen after a disaster. People will be born, folks will want to be married, and funerals will need to be held. One congregation, undergoing extensive repairs, put up a banner on the surrounding scaffolding proclaiming "Marriage Under Construction" for weddings. Only when the time is truly right, celebrate recovery. It may be that the celebration will happen when there is consensus that the "new normal" has emerged.

The Very Rev. Canon Michael Bamberger has been rector of The Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Sierra Madre, CA, since 1986. He is also the Diocesan Disaster Coordinator for the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles and is a member of the Episcopal Relief & Development's Partners in Response team.

[Visit Episcopal Relief & Development's Resource Library to download a printable copy of this article.](#)

Episcopal Diocese of New York

The Diocese of New York is working with volunteers and young people from Episcopal Service Corps to rebuild homes on Staten Island following Hurricane Sandy.

Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey

The Diocese of New Jersey is working with parishes statewide to identify those falling through the cracks and creating parish-based programs to meet needs following Hurricane Sandy.

Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

All Saints Episcopal Church in Minot is coordinating with volunteers to rebuild flooded homes.

Episcopal Diocese of Texas

The diocese and Calvary Episcopal Church are working with its ecumenical partners in Bastrop to rebuild homes destroyed by the fires in the fall of 2011.

New Resources for Disaster Relief:

[Volunteer Curriculum: Ready to Serve with Compassion. Activities to orient volunteers responding to disaster.](#)

[Slideshow on volunteer response in the Diocese of Easton, MD.](#)



U.S. Disaster Program

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September is National Disaster Preparedness Month

Download and share these resources from Episcopal Relief & Development's Resource Library to learn more about parish disaster preparedness.

[Preparedness Planning Guide for Congregations and Parishes](#), and its accompanying [Facilitator's Guide](#).

[Success Stories: Preparing with Church Partnerships | Galveston, TX](#)

[How To: Building Relationships for Response | New Orleans, LA](#)

[Tips and Lessons: Safeguarding Important Documents | Joppa, MD](#)

[Tips and Lessons: Individual and Family Preparedness](#)

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