



Congregational Preparedness

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“We can be anxious or we can be ready.”

Planning for emergencies means analyzing potential losses and planning how to minimize its effects. As you prepare to be UMCOR in your community, ponder the implications and ramifications of a particular disaster happening to help you visualize what your answers may be.

Preparedness may make a great difference in depth of destruction and the speed of recovery. Some considerations are:

- reviewing all insurance coverage
- reviewing responsibilities of various staff members and church leaders in the event of an emergency
- locating a qualified contractor and/or subcontractors in advance
- relocation possibilities for worship
- evacuation plan
- assessing congregational members status and needs
- protecting vital church records
- documenting the building and its contents
- establishing regular building inspection and maintenance
- and finally, putting the plan down on paper and storing a copy off-site

1. Member Safety

- If disaster strikes during worship activities, do you have
 - An evacuation plan?
 - Storm shelter readily identified?
 - Someone identified as to who is in charge?
- Calling tree for checking welfare of members affected and response needed
 - Who to call
 - Elderly
 - Infirm
 - Disabled
 - General membership
 - Who will call whom
 - What to do
 - Damage assessments
 - Needs identified -relocation of person(s)? shelter? Medical assistance?
 - Resources available – agencies and phone numbers
 - What to do with the information
 - Who do you give it to
 - How to respond

2. Insurance Coverage

- Are your building and personal property limits sufficient?
- Do you review your limits and coverage at least annually?
- Do you have additional coverage for other costs such as extra expenses and loss of donations?
- Does it cover replacement cost?
- Which company is the most qualified disaster-recovery contractor in your area?
- Are recent photos, videos, blueprints available of the church structure and contents?

3. *Vital Church Records: Are records secured if _____ happens?*

- Flood
- Flash flood
- Tornado
- Straight line winds
- Fire
- Terrorist attack
- Earthquake
- Vandalism

4. *Church functionality: If a pandemic outbreak occurs, how will these normal events be continued?*

- Worship service
- Meetings
- Shut-in visits
- Pastoral care visits
- Hospital visits
- Funerals
- Weddings
- Other celebrations
- Educational functions
- Child care
- Preschool

5. *Serving the Community at large: How can the church serve its members and the community at large?*

- Provide shelter
- Food distribution
- Day care
- Pastoral care – what boundaries should be set if any
- Contact list
- Fundraising
- Trained laity in spiritual care (SAID, Stephen Ministers, Gifts)
- Parish nurse availability
- Assess damage
- Identify needs
- Coordinate volunteers
- Provide meals
- House volunteers

6. *Building functionality: If the church building is heavily damaged or destroyed:*

- Do you have another location secured to hold worship services?
- Do you have a written agreement securing that site? When is it reviewed/renewed?
- Contractors are in high demand at after a disaster. Does your congregation have an agreement with a reputable contractor so restoration can begin as soon as possible?
- Is building maintenance current and inspections done at least yearly?
- Identify locations of chemical, electrical, gas, fire-fighting equipment, exits, emergency phone numbers, keys, first aid kits, wheelchairs, stretchers, radio

7. *Is your plan in writing and a copy stored off church property?*



Be able to respond so you can say:
I am trained. I am ready. Lean on me.



The Mississippi Annual Conference
of The United Methodist Church

Disaster Response