



PREPARED, NOT SCARED



National Preparedness Month 2019

Faith Communities are in a unique position to offer support and care in times of crisis and community disaster. We can provide:

Comfort and Hope

In a disaster, religious leaders are trusted caregivers to whom the majority of Americans turn for assistance and support for healing. You can offer comfort, support, clarity, and direction in times of crisis. You are in a unique position to respond to people who are impacted by a disaster because you are already trusted and in an established leadership role and you bring a faith perspective to the community's need for meaning after a disaster.

Prayer/Worship Services/Events

The primary disaster role of religious leaders is to help communities find meaning in crisis. Providing opportunities for and leading prayer/worship services provides an essential foundation for community recovery. Work with your partners to offer community-based worship services and other healing events such as anniversary commemorations. Target different audiences: youth, seniors, etc.

Justice and Healing

In all of your interactions, be a voice of reason and a "non-anxious presence." Use your connections with politicians and community leaders and your presence in coordinating entities and community councils to:

- Provide expertise on particular needs of affected populations
- Provide religious and cultural guidance on, and assistance in, expediting and implementing best practices, including funeral and burial services
- Promote efforts to curtail disaster-related bias crimes.

***Prayer:** God who gives us a spirit of courage, may we be your bold hands and feet in times of emergency and community stress.*



Plan Ahead for Disaster Response and Recovery

Congregations have an important role to play in supporting the resilience and recovery of their neighborhoods when disaster strikes. But it's important to plan ahead. Here are some things you can put in place now:

Offer your facilities. Facilities of all sizes and make-ups can be used in many ways during disasters, as assistance centers, dorms for volunteers, shelters and warehouses.

Short-term recovery services. Home clean-up, child-care, and food services are just a few of the ways you can assist. Following a disaster, many relief agencies are looking for congregations to organize teams of volunteers and respond to clean-up and recovery needs as they emerge.

Encourage volunteering. Volunteers should affiliate with an organization before a disaster. Look into agencies such as your denomination's or faith community's recovery agencies and their local operations, as well as local programs of the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross.

Disaster Chaplaincy. Get trained ahead of time and be sure to work in coordination with local disaster response organizations.

Support Unmet Needs Round Tables. Local Unmet Needs Committees or Roundtables bring together donors and casework agencies to financially assist those impacted by a disaster, provide emergency assistance, and ensure victims' long-term recovery when all other means of assistance are no longer available. Congregations should fundraise early on to help support the ongoing unmet needs of disaster victims.

Help local causes. Social service organizations are often neglected during disasters. Support existing social service programs and provide opportunities for others to support your programs.

