

LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR CHURCH-BASED DISASTER RELIEF IN
AMHERST COUNTY, VA**

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By

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR CHURCH-BASED DISASTER RELIEF IN AMHERST, VA

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Liberty Theological Seminary, 2016

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The purpose of this project is to provide a manual for the local church to implement in preparation for and during times of disaster. The author will specifically focus on the region of Amherst County, Virginia for this project. The author will approach this project by first defining what a disaster is and the role the church should play during times of great need. Attention will be given specifically to how the church should respond during times of disaster in foreign nations, in the United States, in nearby counties, and in the community of the church's backyard. This project will provide a Scriptural basis for disaster relief found in Acts 11:27-30. After presenting the urgent need that exists for churches to be involved in disaster relief efforts, the author will provide a model for the church to implement when a disaster occurs. The author will provide examples of churches who have responded to disasters effectively. This study will also utilize qualitative data sets. This project will specifically survey the role of first responders, church leaders, and government officials in Amherst County during in times of emergency. Research will be gathered through interviews with key leaders who are currently involved with emergency service ministries such as Samaritan's Purse International and other national and international emergency responders. The underlying

purpose is to reveal the need people have for the local church during times of emergency and how the church can most effectively respond to their cries for help.

Abstract length: 245 words.

DEDICATION

I present this work to my dear brothers and sisters in Christ in many regions of the world from whom I have had the privilege to learn so much during disaster relief efforts. Your examples have forever influenced my life. Only heaven will reveal the lives you have impacted. I would like to especially thank my friends and co-laborers at Samaritan's Purse International. Thank you for answering the call. I also dedicate this project to my family (My father and pastor, George Rose, Jr.; My mother, Nedra Rose; My Grandpa, George Rose, Sr.; My Grandma, Elgevia Rose; My siblings: Monica Brennan and Jeremy Rose; whose advice and prayers have aided me to finish this thesis project. I would like to thank Dr. Randy Miller who aided me in locating key sources for my research. I would also like to thank my Thesis Project mentor, Dr. David Hirshman whose counsel and encouragement helped me to complete this project.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mankind may have his theories, but only God knows why there is a growing increase in disasters world-wide in the last century. According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the Red Cross and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) as well as others, the number of disasters, including earthquakes, floods, droughts, cyclones, and tsunamis have been steadily increasing since the early 1900's. One author reported in "*Chaplaincy Today*" that "Nine out of the ten most financially destructive disasters have occurred in the past four years"¹ (speaking of the time between 2002 and 2006). The earthquake and tsunami which struck eastern Japan in the year 2011, killed more than 15,000 people with more than 8,000 left missing. In May of 2000, New Mexico had more than 12,000 evacuated as 43,000 acres of wooded mountain landscape and 354 homes were burnt to the ground in a forest fire. The devastating earthquake which struck Haiti on January 12, of 2010, killed over 230,000 people and injured many, many more. One year after the disaster, 1.2 million people were still living in tents, and many were still in need of water, food, and security.²

The United States has also known increased devastation as tornadoes have struck Joplin, Missouri, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, as well as others and has seen flooding in many places, including Nashville, Tennessee, and Mississippi in recent years. In the year 2013,

¹ Earl E. Johnson, Between the Storms: Reflections on Chaplaincy During Natural and Human Caused Disasters (Schaumburg, IL: Chaplaincy Today, 2006) 3-7.

² Kari A. O'Grady, et al., Earthquake in Haiti: Relationship with the Sacred in Times of Trauma (La Mirada, CA: Journal of Psychology & Theology, 2012) 289-301.

dry conditions led to the devastating wildfires that ripped apart Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Montana, Idaho, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington, and California, forcing people to evacuate and destroying many homes. According to the Red Cross nearly 4,000 overnight stays were provided in shelters, more than 159,000 meals and tens of thousands of relief items were handed out to people in need.³ Moreover, the Derecho storm, made up of a string of storms with winds up to 90 miles per hour, swept across Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, New Jersey, Ohio, and the District of Columbia in June of 2013. This wave of storms brought with them hundreds of reports of devastating winds. Millions were without power in sweltering areas as high temperatures broke records. These few examples, as well as, many other studies, affirm this growing phenomenon as what appears to be an increase in disasters in the U.S.A. as well as the world and the great need for help in response efforts.

Although this rise in disasters cannot be denied, often times, government agencies continue efforts to remedy the problem alone or with little outside help. Many citizens as well, often expect a single agency of the government, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to always come to their aid and to remedy completely the situation. It seems that with the number of disasters that are occurring, the scope and long-term impact is impossible for any single organization or government, no matter how large or well endowed, to serve sufficiently for relief, rehabilitation and development. When it comes to government assistance, relief is often times slowed by bureaucracy. Therefore, Christian charity and the role that the church can play are a vital source of relief and comfort for those in need. Franklin Graham, CEO and President of Samaritan's

³ www.redcross.org/news/press-release/Busy-2012-for-Red-Cross-with-113-Large-Responses-in-42-States, 8/9/2013.

Purse, reinforced this when he said, "Pastors usually know their community better than government officials . . . While the government talks about systems and infrastructure problems, faith-based organizations are able to provide immediate assistance thanks to established relationships with churches on the ground."⁴ This was also something that Mary Landon Darden of Baylor University discovered first hand when she mobilized her church to provide shelter and services for evacuees from Hurricane Katrina. She said,

We filled our shelter within the next 24 hours with more than 50 people. The influx did not slow, and it was quickly evident that local government offices and the local Red Cross office were not prepared for the numbers of people coming our way... These governmental and support agencies learned from Katrina that there may be situations that exceed their ability to handle independently."⁵

Many people, unfortunately, learn the hard way and come to realize that depending on one agency, even as large and financially stable as the U.S. government, can be an unwise decision. Author and Chaplain Earl Johnson speaks directly to this, "In the aftermath of Katrina, another reality surfaced. Help, previously assumed, will not always be there or even be on the way. After five days of living on the Interstate 10 overpass or at the New Orleans Convention Center, children pleaded with television cameras, 'Where is our help? Doesn't anyone care?'"⁶ The author went on to explain how her county alone was slated to receive more than 20,000 evacuees and that there were not sufficient government buildings or needed staff in the entire county to house or care for

⁴ Ray Nothstine, The Church and Disaster Relief: Shelter from the Stormy Blast (Grand Rapids, MI: Religion and Liberty, 2012).

⁵ Mary Landon Darden, Disaster Relief and the Church (Waco, TX: Family and Community Ministries, 2008) 27-29.

⁶ Earl E. Johnson, Between the Storms: Reflections on Chaplaincy During Natural and Human Caused Disasters (Schaumburg, IL: Chaplaincy Today, 2006) 4-5.

that many people. Just recently have some leaders finally recognized that they must turn to the churches to find a solution.⁷

During Hurricane Katrina, churches and non-profit organizations were the ones who carried the torch and led the way in providing shelter, spiritual counseling, food, and other services. Author Mary L. Darden's church alone provided shelter for more than 50 people, 511 if you count other local churches that followed her church's disaster plan, and personnel that worked 12-18 hour shifts in order to help victims.⁸

In the wake of Japan's tsunami and earthquake, many churches opened their facilities, most of which were already outfitted with the necessary facilities, as refugee centers. The YMCA in Kobe began soliciting relief funds along with World Vision, who is still there with the Salvation Army, United Church of Christ, and a small Jewish population, reaching out to help the people of Japan recover from the disaster.⁹

Whenever a disaster occurs, the church should already have the personnel, the desire, the facilities, work ethic, and finances to meet the needs of any disaster, along with help from other agencies working in concert. It would be beneficial to all for government relief-agency leaders to realize that only these grass-roots religious organizations have the personnel, resources, and longevity to continue extended relief, rehabilitation and development. Further, it would also be advantageous for them to work with religious organizations more and even ask how to support or supplement them in their efforts. These religious organizations will go the distance, and hopefully then the

⁷ Earl E. Johnson, Between the Storms: Reflections on Chaplaincy During Natural and Human Caused Disasters (Schaumburg, IL: Chaplaincy Today, 2006) 29.

⁸ Ibid. 28.

⁹ Levi McLaughlin, In the Wake of the Tsunami – Religious Responses to the Great East Japan Earthquake (New York, NY: Crosscurrents, 2011) 293-294.

officials helping in these efforts will try to partner with and help them more, communicate with and consider them an integral part of disaster relief. The Church has a necessary and vital role to play in disaster relief efforts, the problem lies in what will be discussed next.

Statement of the Problem

Without a doubt, a primary problem exists in the church today. However, it is not a problem of ability or potential. The ability of the church has been proven again and again and is no doubt present and active today. The problem is not with potential; as has been presented here, the church has massive potential with its resources, volunteer laborers, and heart. The problem that lies within the church today is the absence of organization and preparation within, and cooperation without, to face a disaster when it comes. In short, the local church tends to have no plan. In the majority of cases, the church is not ready, they have not trained their people, allocated resources, came up with a plan of action, or created the avenues of communication to be prepared when a disaster arrives. Furthermore, they have most likely not thought through the types of help they can and cannot offer or the difference between relief, rehabilitation, and development. If the church could be helped in this area by creating an action plan, organization, education, training, and development it truly has the potential to make every other agency hardly necessary and also to fulfill its mission-mandate at the same time. The church in the West needs help to realize the potential that it possesses to make a difference in the area of disaster relief. It indeed has enormous potential. Authors Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert point out, “The average North American enjoys a standard of living that has been

unimaginable for most of human history...If you are a North American Christian, the reality of our society's vast wealth presents you with an enormous responsibility, for throughout the Scriptures God's people are commanded to show compassion to the poor."¹⁰ In the West, in particular, the average American has the resources to make a significant contribution in times of disaster to those who are hurting. Many, if not most, churches already have the facilities, finances, personnel, and equipment to respond effectively to a disaster. The potential is there, the resources are there, the heart is there, what is lacking is organization, preparation, and the wisdom to respond effectively and appropriately.

One way that this disorganization can manifest itself is in how many relief efforts by the church have resulted in great turmoil and added trauma both to the volunteers and to other relief workers or rescuers. The reason for this is often due to the fact that "Eager congregations which self-deploy individuals and groups into impacted areas without adequate backup resources and resupply networks, quickly join the original victims of the disaster and tax the recovery machinery. The well-intentioned and well-meaning soon learn that severe hardship restrictions are real."¹¹ The lack of forethought and planning is apparent. This illustrates why it is so imperative for churches to be properly trained and prepared for disasters before they make a last minute, although well-meaning, foolish, disorganized, and potentially culturally offensive, hurtful, or dangerous decision.

A survey taken in Germany revealed some of the same problems with churches and other civic groups; "Civic groups usually have not studied the facts deeply enough to

¹⁰ Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert, When Helping Hurts, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), 13.

¹¹ Ibid. 5.

have an informed opinion, they can often be irresponsible, making suggestions which have great public appeal but which are often not possible to put into action, and are often antagonistic towards government.”¹² This can be true in foreign or domestic contexts as the church responds to disasters. Regardless of denomination, it is of the utmost importance that religious leaders see the value of working together, working appropriately within culture or government and of having a coherent, thoughtful plan for responding to disasters together as a united front. It should also be stated that an effective disaster relief program will follow each church’s philosophy and serve as other ministries do within the church. Disaster relief, on some level, should be seen as a vital ministry within every church, with the same importance and merit as any other ministry. This emphasis and pro-active thinking can aid Churches from overextending, or responding too hastily when a disastrous event takes place. There are many resources available to the church, as will be discussed later, that offer help in planning, estimating what a church’s capacity is to respond, how to organize people for a response, and steps to come up with a plan for responding ahead of time. For the average church of less than 100 people, a disaster response can be intimidating, but this need not be so. With only a small amount of planning and forethought, the average busy pastor and small church can have a significant impact on a disaster response.

This leads to the question, ‘How may a church healthily and effectively respond?’ ‘What is the actual role of the church when facing disasters?’ Author Mary Darden argues, “In many circumstances, churches are the best resource to provide immediate and personal care. In fact (she says) I would argue that they may be the only viable option for

¹² Roland L. Warren, Citizen Participation in Community Affairs in Stuttgart, Germany (Oxford, England: Social Forces, 1958) 322-329.

personal, holistic, and restorative care in a large catastrophic disaster... They already have many desperately needed resources readily available and, can help meet the significant needs of a population experiencing disaster.”¹³ The church’s role is to take the lead and develop a disaster relief response plan. “They should organize with other regional churches to form a disaster relief coalition, then partner with the various city and support agencies in their area to provide food and supplies.”¹⁴ Once again, this does not have to be a daunting task. With a little time and preparation, much work can be healthily accomplished.

The church is meant to meet these physical needs of people, but it is also to meet the spiritual needs and emotional needs of people. The Journal of Psychology and Theology reports that,

“A growing body of research suggests that many traumatic life events, including natural disasters, precipitate positive psychological changes, such as broadened view of life, an increased sense of meaning and purpose for existence, and an increase in spirituality... according to cognitive adaption theory, positive reinterpretation of a traumatic event serves an adaptive role for experiencing stress-related growth.”¹⁵

Therefore, it can be argued that the church’s timely response in both physical and spiritual spheres can be vital to the health of people both physically, mentally and spiritually. This holistic approach to relief work treats the whole person, not merely their tangible needs or physical ailments. The church, based on the Bible, addresses every part of man’s needs, including his need for hope and his need to have the mental health to desire to rebuild and move on toward life. This openness to the gospel which disasters

¹³ Mary Landon Darden, Disaster Relief and the Church (Waco, TX: Family and Community Ministries, 2008) 28.

¹⁴ Ibid. 29.

¹⁵ Kari A. O’Grady, et al., Earthquake in Haiti: Relationship with the Sacred in Times of Trauma (La Mirada, CA: Journal of Psychology & Theology, 2012) 289-301.

often present is the key in treating the whole person, and therefore, a rapid response by the church is vital! As another author points out:

“There are those who believe that Noah’s ark was the first emergency response vehicle. Spiritual care professionals represent the hope embodied in that vision. Someone will have a rope, a boat, an oxygen mask, or a life preserver. Someone will be able to get where help is needed promptly. Such hope is embodied in the primary need of disaster survivors for information and reassurance even before shelter and sustenance.”¹⁶

Pastors and ministers of various types are already uniquely gifted and trained to provide such spiritual, emotional, and life-giving support. Christians should be among the world’s most giving, loving, and helping people in times of disaster. As one author put it, “This love which Christ demands from his followers is essentially a ‘selfless, forgiving, and sacrificial love.’ It should be selfless in the sense that it does not have personal interest or strings attached when it is shown...sacrificial in the sense that we are ready to meet the cost involved as Jesus did.”¹⁷ Jesus didn’t cure everyone, but He gave everybody hope; he served, and loved, and gave.

It is evident, if the church does not take its rightful place and if Christians do not see the importance of stepping forward, as their leader did, and preparing and training themselves for disaster, then many more people will be forced to suffer and even die as a result of the church not taking seriously its call to be prepared for action. Church leaders desperately need training in disaster relief. Believers must decide whether or not it believes in the importance of the Isaiah 1:16-17 and the Isaiah 58 mandate. This passage

¹⁶ Earl E. Johnson, Between the Storms: Reflections on Chaplaincy During Natural and Human Caused Disasters (Schaumburg, IL: Chaplaincy Today, 2006) 4-5.

¹⁷ Isaiah M. Dau, Following Jesus in a World of Suffering and Violence (Nairobi, Kenya: An edited version of a paper delivered at the consultation of the Lausanne theology Working group in Partnership with the WEA, 2007) 358-368.

speaks of “seeking justice, encouraging the oppressed, defending the cause of the fatherless, pleading the case of the widow, losing the chains of oppression, sharing food with the hungry, providing the poor with shelter, and to clothe the naked, and not turn away from one’s neighbor.”¹⁸ This is the call on everyone who calls themselves Christians.

Therefore, regardless of denominational affiliation, evangelicals agree that with the ever-increasing number of disasters taking place around the world, there is an open door for churches to minister to those affected. Author John Piper proclaims:

With half the world’s population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have never heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world.”¹⁹

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis project is to create a model for the development and implementation of a Disaster Relief Team in the local church in Amherst County, Virginia to accomplish the same end to which Dr. John Piper refers. The project will be approached by first defining disaster relief as well as presenting the three types of disaster response ministry. This project will also provide an overview of issues the church today encounters and the result of Christian passivism on the church and disaster victims in today’s times. Research on disaster relief throughout history will be presented. The author will provide an overview of church institutions training their

¹⁸ Isaiah 1:16-17; 58:1-10. All Scripture references taken from the New King James Version Translation (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), unless otherwise noted.

¹⁹ Piper, John. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991. 470.

members in the field of disaster relief, as well as, the curriculum being used to equip and train.

The underlying thesis is to reveal the need of the local church to prepare and plan for, train and be ready to respond quickly and powerfully to disasters when they strike. The church has to train their members to minister to, and provide for men and women who are victims of disasters. The church has to appoint disaster relief directors to implement programs for deployment. The church has this capacity, even small churches and busy pastors can do something, can plan something, and together, make a huge difference to many people facing disaster.

Statement of Limitations

This project in no way presents the detail in which disaster relief or disaster relief in the church is understood or represented today or the overall solution. However, the author's desire is for the Lord to use this project to create a greater awareness of what effective disaster relief is and how a local church's disaster relief plan and team can aid both the church and the world. Secondly, this project seeks to enhance the growing opportunity for churches and to enlighten Church leaders to provide ministry outlets for men and women to become trained in disaster relief. The many related topics of disaster relief will be ignored in order to present a manual for implementing a disaster relief plan and team in the local church including the growing need for such a training and plan for local church disaster relief in Virginia, the United States, and the world.

Biblical and Theological Basis

Scripture supports the necessity of Christ's Church to possess a plan and methodology for responding to disasters and the damage they cause, as well as, the divine mandate for Christians ministering to the victims in Luke 10:30-37 and 2 Corinthians 4:5. This thesis project will define disaster relief work based on a Biblical and theological understanding of the many Scriptures related specifically to this type of ministry. The essential passages regarding relief work in the church will be identified and annotated such as: Luke 10:30-37, 2 Corinthians 4:5, Nehemiah 3, James 2:14-17, Isaiah 1:16-17, 58:1-10, Matthew 24:7-8, II Chronicles 7:13-14, Isaiah 61:1-6, and Galatians 5:13-16.

A Biblical Theology of disaster relief work, through the church, will be presented in this project based upon the Word of God. The foundation of church relief work will be defined based on Scripture. Ministries of relief will be studied from the Old and New Testament passages where the reader is given examples of the church ministering to and being ministered by others.

Although disaster relief ministry in the church today is a seemingly new phenomenon, with regards to specific programs designed to minister effectively and efficiently to the spiritual growth, physical, and emotional healing and restoration of disaster victims, a ministry like this has been part of God's design since the creation of the world. Adam and Eve were given a mandate by God to be the caretakers of the garden as Genesis Chapter 1 says:

“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon

the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so."²⁰

One of the reasons that Man and Woman were created was to glorify God by taking care of the planet. As author and President of the Southern Baptist Denomination, Al Mohler puts it:

“A proper evangelical concern about care for the environment is rooted in a song many of us learned as children—this really is "our Father's world." The biblical themes of dominion and stewardship are essential to our reading of the Scriptures, from creation in Genesis to new creation in the Book of Revelation. In Genesis, God creates humanity in his own image. To this creature, God extends a mandate of dominion in no uncertain terms: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:28, ESV). For a long time, I did my best in my teaching and writing to "balance" this verse and its clear declaration of human dominion over the created order with the biblical theme of stewardship. But I have come to the conclusion that they are really one and the same. A proper understanding of dominion includes stewardship...we cannot neglect our responsibility to exercise our dominion in a way that treasures the earth, heals its wounds, respects its creatures, and values its divinely given resources...We know that we will be judged for our stewardship of the earth."²¹

Disaster relief ministry is seen throughout the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. “As Rabbi Myrna Matsa observes: ‘The people of God accept in perpetuity the message of Leviticus 19:2: ‘You shall be holy because I the Lord your God am holy’ and holiness means to nurture the earth, care for humanity, and leave the world in a better condition than the way we found it.’”²² The Jewish nation, as they strove to follow the

²⁰ Genesis 1:28-30.

²¹ R. Albert Mohler Jr, Creation Care: No Less Than Stewards (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2010).

²² Thomas Kember, The Theology of Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation (New York, NY: New World Outlook Magazine, 2013).

law, would have to have been active in providing relief to those in disasters in order to be obedient to Yahweh. This can also be seen in I Samuel 11, when the Israelites came to the rescue of the people of Jabesh-Gilead while they were under siege from a foreign army or the way in which Joseph wisely was used of the Lord to store up food for the people to use during the famine disaster that swept across Egypt for years.²³ From the Old to New Testament, God has always looked out for the poor, the vulnerable, the unfortunate and those enduring poverty, struggling as widows, suffering as orphans, or victims of natural or man-made disasters. God promised wrath to those who took advantage or did not help those in similar plights as these.

God's law was one of a loving Father, full of care and concern. He encouraged His people to be merciful and generous to the unfortunate Jew as well as the "strangers among you."²⁴ Also in the Old Testament, God implemented laws that were to take care of those in need. An example of this is when He instructed that a farmer could not glean his field after the harvest. This was to leave left-overs, essentially, for those without. A great example of this from the Old Testament was when Ruth was gleaning in the field of Boaz. If some grain fell off the wagon, it could not be picked up, it had to be left. It was for the poor or struggling ones. Farmers were also instructed that they could not cut the corners of his field or thrash their olive trees more than once, as both were to be reserved for the poor and unfortunate. And if that were not enough, God made sure that there were

²³ Genesis 12, 26.

²⁴ Leviticus 19:33-34.

special tithes and offerings for the poor as well.²⁵ It is clear that God’s heart was for the hurting and suffering of this world.

The New Testament also provides a Biblical basis for disaster relief through the church. In the book of Acts, Chapter 11, the church is seen giving sacrificially for other believers in need. Acts 11 reveals what may have been the very first Christian collection for survivors of a disaster. It was when the church at Antioch heard that the believers in Judea were facing famine that, “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea.”²⁶ Scholars have referred to this as “the Collective”.

Further, in the story of the Good Samaritan that is found in Luke 10, Jesus takes the term “neighbor” and broadens it to slice through ethnic and religious lines for the sake of loving others and showing honor and dignity to all. Another example, amongst the many that could be used, is found in Matthew 25, where Jesus makes clear the obligation of His followers to those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, naked, or in jail. In the “Greatest Commandment,” Jesus tells His followers that they should love and care for their neighbors with the same love and care that they show themselves. In Galatians 5:14, the Apostle Paul uses “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” to sum up the whole of the religious law. It is evident that disaster relief has its roots in the Old and New Testaments. A few examples have been listed to exemplify this precedent and to lay the theoretical and biblical basis for it.

Statement of Methodology

²⁵ Leviticus 19:10, Deut 24:21.

²⁶ Acts 11:29.

This project will be approached in the following manner: Chapter One: The Great Need for the Church to be Involved in Disaster Relief and The Need for a Plan, Chapter Two: What is/is not Disaster Relief and The High Calling of the Church to Respond, Chapter Three: The Biblical Foundation for Disaster Relief, Chapter Four: The Church's Response to Disaster Relief, Chapter Five: A Strategic Plan of Disaster Relief for the Local Church to Implement, and Chapter Six: Conclusion.

This study will utilize quantitative and qualitative data sets. A survey will be used to develop the quantitative data set. It will assess the perceived need for such emergency services by surveying first responders, church leaders, and government officials in Amherst County. The qualitative data sets will be gathering information through interviews with people who are involved with the emergency service ministries including people in Samaritan's Purse International and other national and international emergency responders. Respondents will be asked five questions and they will respond using the Likert scale. The survey will establish the need and what the church's role may look like in a disaster. The model will establish "How to," step by step and implement the plan in a local church. The questions will be as follows: 1. Do you feel there is a need for a manual in local churches that would help them produce a disaster-relief plan to follow and a disaster relief team to deploy when natural or man-made tragedies occur? 2. If so, what should the Church's role be in Disaster relief? 3. What might incorporation look like between the church and other agencies, such as the government or the Salvation Army? 4.

What more could the government and other agencies do to utilize the Church and all it has to offer?

After the introduction, the definitions and the difference between disaster relief, rehabilitation and development will be discussed and differentiated between each one. Emphasis will be placed on how a disaster-relief plan, that is practical, and Biblically founded, can be mobilized through a network of local churches so that they respond quickly, appropriately, and effectively in times of disaster. Alarming statistics will be given in chapter two which will create a greater awareness for the necessity of local church disaster relief teams. Chapter Three will contain an overview of organizations providing training for church leaders in the area of disaster relief. In Chapter Four, the author will present concluding thoughts and attempt to bring the reader back to a clear understanding of what has been covered and what must be done.

Review of Literature

There are a variety of resources available for disaster relief in the local church as well as the historical records of such. More resources exist on the role that Christians play in disaster relief responses than on the background, necessity, and methodology of a disaster relief ministry in the local church. An excellent resource for any church leader or member would be the book *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. In this book, the authors present an overview of issues relating to how to serve practically the poor and walk with them in a relationship versus merely doling out resources that just tend to make them dependent and weak. It brings to light how and who one should even be classified as a poor or needy person; provides principles on how to go about doing

effective relief, how to rehabilitate, and how to lead in developing a hurting people. Next, it focuses on the strategies one would need in order to help people effectively both here and abroad. Finally, it finishes by applying what was learned in the readers own context. The authors provide the necessary Biblical exegesis along with real life examples that lead to the practical application of Godly wisdom when it comes to the needy. It challenges the Western Church to reevaluate its approach to relief, rehabilitation and development and points back to the Biblical roots for motive and practice. The chapters consist of a detailed synopsis of the specific difficulties and the methodology of relief work. The authors touch on the reason Jesus came to humanity and what that means for the church, what it truly means to be poor, how to stay focused on people during relief and development phases and not to allow one's self or organization to value and be bogged down in broken program rather than humanity, and the different types of poverty. They also explore how real help looks like, how to do short-term missions in a Biblical and also effective manner, how to live one's life missionally, and how to give wisely. They finally wrap up their work by going into how to change and become more effective and respond rightly, and how to create an action plan for doing so.

A very helpful resource for a Church's Disaster Relief workers and leaders would be *Earthquake in Haiti: Relationship with the Sacred in Times of Trauma*. Authors Kari O'Grady, Deborah G. Rollison, Timothy S. Hanna, Heidi Schreiber-Pan, and Manuel A. Ruiz present a case-study of how reachable people are following a disaster like the one Haiti experienced. *Earthquake in Haiti* provides an overview of how trauma affects humans in psychological, mental, emotional, and spiritual ways. The various sections in the book include the following: Growth following trauma, Spirituality and Trauma,

Relationship with God and Trauma, Posttraumatic Growth and Spiritual Transformation, Relational Perspective of Spirituality, the Frequency of Spiritual and Religious Experiences, and then the types of cultural considerations one should consider.

Disaster Relief and the Church by Mary L. Darden serves as another excellent resource for illustrating, teaching and training the local church for disaster relief planning and preparation. One of the main objectives of this book is to offer an example or illustration to the church and government relief organizations as to the need for churches to play a significant role in disaster relief. The author begins with a story about her own church's last minute response to Hurricane Katrina and what they did to successfully aid in relief efforts. She pointed out the following: Local government offices and the local Red Cross are not enough to be prepared for the number of people affected by a large disaster such as Hurricane Katrina. Once a model for disaster relief is implemented in a church it can be readily reproduced through leaders passing on to leaders what to do. Mary Darden elaborates that churches are best suited to provide personal care because they know the culture, often times they know the people, many times already have the facilities, and can offer a more holistic approach to victims. She ultimately suggests a disaster relief coalition between churches that will serve as a net of relief to a given area. The last section of this article provides a broad overview what churches can do to prepare themselves for action.

Emphasis on how to prepare for tragedy is provided by Earl E. Johnson in the Article, *Between the Storms: Reflections on Chaplaincy During Natural and Human-Caused Disasters*. The author expounds on the origin of the governments beginning emphasis on spiritual care following the 1996 TWA Flight 800 explosion. Helpful

thoughts are offered to aid disaster responders such as what it means to be a vulnerable population, how the scope of a disaster determines, all the more, the need for more than one agency to respond, the need for more trained responders and prepared churches, and how to better prepare for the future. Emphasis is placed on preparing through training.

Another valuable resource, compiled by Levi McLaughlin, is the Article, *In the Wake of the Tsunami – Religious Responses to the Great East Japan Earthquake*. McLaughlin provides an overview of the mass of religious disaster relief workers mobilized after the Japanese earthquake and tsunami. McLaughlin emphasizes the importance of every religious organization coming together, each in their own way, to help in the relief.

Stacey Burlet and Helen Reid provide a case study for motivating church members to social action in their article, *The Social and Political Implications of Lay Activism: A Case Study of Christian Social Action in Leeds*. After conveying the methodology and the motivations for lay social activism of Christians in Leeds, Burlet and Reid elaborate on the social and political implications in a reconstructing of the role that the laity possess. Moreover, they emphasize that civic traditions are shaped by lay activists as well. They conclude that lay involvement in social activism extends the role of laypeople beyond sharing in worship and receiving guidance from faith leaders: their role comes to include political, economic, and social responsibilities for non-Christians and for the cities in which they live. Social action functions as the place where they live out their faith, so to speak.

Roland L. Warren provides a snapshot of what citizen participation looks like in his hometown post-World War II in his article, *Citizen Participation in Community*

Affairs in Stuttgart, Germany. Warren provides a practical breakdown of the various civic groups in his city and what type of volunteer base they each have. He then asked the leaders of various civic organizations what problems they experienced with the citizens; to which they mentioned: insufficient knowledge, acting on ignorance, being overly critical of the government, and a lack of desire to give financially to the relief efforts. These types of interviews, as well as those conducted by government officials, offer wisdom on how to go about serving in a disaster while being sensitive to how one could be perceived.

Cole Slattery, Robert Syverston, and Stephen Krill, Jr. provide a variety of steps for improving disaster management leadership in their work in the *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*. The authors place heavy emphasis on an eight-step training model for improving the leadership during disasters.

Author and trainer Isaiah M. Dau conveyed the “how to” of loving the hurting while serving the Lord in a difficult world in the article, *Following Jesus in a World of Suffering and Violence*. The author focuses specifically on what does it look like to follow Jesus in a very real world of pain and destruction and how the cross changes the way believers do disaster relief.

The Article, *Embers of Hope: Surviving the Cerro Grande Fire*, relies on theological reflections of the author, Teralene S. Foxx, when she muses about her own recovery from disaster. She speaks of her own unique community in New Mexico, her town’s response to the fires, the health care chaos that followed and what paths she took to recovery. It is a very vivid picture of the personal journey one must take in order to

overcome the emotional, spiritual, and physical trauma that often comes with a disaster such as the one she experienced.

CHAPTER 2

THE MEANING OF DISASTER RELIEF AND THE HIGH CALLING OF THE CHURCH TO RESPOND

Disaster Defined

With all the beauty and majesty that the world holds for mankind to behold and enjoy, she also can be just as unpredictable and dangerous. The secularist would tend to define a disaster more in terms relating to entropy or the second law of thermodynamics which states that things in the universe tend to go toward a greater level of disorder and not order.²⁷ However, from an evangelical perspective, the Christian would tend to explain a disaster more in terms relating to the fallen world in which we now live; spoken of in Genesis 3. They would tend to say that disasters exist because of sin and that we live in this God-cursed earth, and now there is disorder and devastation.

Webster's Dictionary defines a disaster as, "Something (such as a flood, tornado, fire, plane crash, etc.) that happens suddenly and causes much suffering or loss to many people."²⁸ A disaster is not limited to what comes from nature; however, it also could be man-made, like a mechanical failure, terrorism, or genocide. Whenever a population is overwhelmed by a tragic event, such as those listed above, the term "disaster" is appropriately given.

²⁷ "Second law of thermodynamics." *Merriam-Webster.com*. 2011. <http://www.merriam-webster.com> (8 May 2011).

²⁸ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disaster

Disaster Relief Defined

Disaster relief is a responsive term used for those efforts that relieve those affected by a disaster. It can be defined as, “Things (such as food, money, or medicine) that are given to help people who are victims of a war, earthquake, flood, etc.”²⁹

Disaster relief has many variables, such as climate, the scope of the disaster, funds available for a response, materials available, access to affected peoples, and more. However, even with these variables, there is something inside of most people that desires to help his fellowman in times of disaster, a desire to push through whatever obstacles may hinder in order to help. The specific motivations that lie behind the desire to help others vary from person to person and from organization to organization. And this motive is important if people operating from different motivations are to work together in their efforts to relieve suffering. It is what leads to the next point, the difference between secular motivations for disaster relief and Christian motivations.

The Christian’s primary motivation for engaging in disaster relief comes from a Christian world-view which is rooted in a belief in God, who is Himself a humanitarian and who urges His followers to be the same. “The task of God’s people is rooted in Christ’s mission. Simply stated, Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom in word and in deed, so the church must do the same.”³⁰ The Christian believes that God’s Spirit comes to reside in the believer’s soul, changing their desires, motivations, and making them greater lovers of humanity, more like Christ, and more obedient to God. So the evangelical perspective of disaster relief has a different motivation for why they engage in it. From a non-Christian, secular point of view, when the needs are met the job is done.

²⁹ www.meriam-webster.com/dictionary/relief

³⁰ Corbett & Fikkert, 2012, p37.

There is little thought of the inner spiritual person, and the motivation has little or nothing to do with the God of the Bible.

Beyond the motivation and the difference in mindset, the spirit of the team tends to be different between the two perspectives as well. One author stated it this way,

Social groups, including religious groups, are made up of people sharing a way of life or a worldview. As such, they provide ‘a system of orientation for self-reference, allowing members to define their place in society in comparison with members of other relevant groups... Individuals who apply their religious beliefs to empathize with others who are different from themselves in various ways may be more likely to thrive as active volunteers in secular as well as religious fields.³¹

Because of the similar worldview and the Holy Spirit who they believe resides in them, and through the positive peer pressure of a close-knit faith group³² to follow the path of Jesus Christ. They work together in unity and the motivation for relief work is a very strong and unifying one. A secular perspective may bring some unity as well, but when it comes to motivations for relief work and for a way of thinking and way of life, they often do not have a common world-view or a common “Bible” that holds them together; they are as diverse as the personalities on a relief team.

There are also differences in the reasons for staying long term after the initial response is complete. The motivation for staying after the initial phase of relief work has been completed is still a very strong one; it is one that seeks to see the people flourish spiritually, emotionally, physically, and even materially. Secular relief organizations tend to move on after the initial phase of relief work takes place. This student saw this first

³¹ Hiromi Taniguchi & Leonard D. Thomas, The Influences of religious Attitudes on Volunteering, In International Society for Third-Sector Research. John Hopkin University, Volume 22:335-355. 2010. p338.

³² Ibid. bottom of p338.

hand through working with Samaritan's Purse International Relief in the Philippines following Typhoon Hyaan; a Category 5 storm system that wreaked havoc on the Island of Leyte, killing between 7-10,000 people. There was much skepticism towards NGO's (Non-Government Organizations that provide relief) amongst the Filipino people. Many would sheepishly ask how long Samaritan's Purse would be staying there before leaving them; expecting that they would, as in times past, be leaving soon after the cameras left. Fortunately, Samaritan's Purse is a Christian organization that desires to stay for a number of years in order to build relationships, strengthen native social organizations that help people (primarily the church), and pour into people the hope of Jesus Christ, a hope that goes beyond this life and endures through all suffering. Again, here is another example of why motivations are important. Of course, there is much good work taking place through secular NGO's as well, and the Faith Based Organizations (FBO's) partner with them in every disaster they find themselves. But the perspective towards relief work is formed from a different world-view and thus, contains different motivations, and different goals. This is not meant to imply that the secular perspective towards disaster relief is less helpful or should be ignored, but to say that it is different and that the evangelical perspective tends to treat the whole person, body, soul, and spirit; whereas the secular looks primarily at the physical and perhaps emotional or psychological.

Another difference between evangelical and secular perspectives on relief has to do with money. "In the evangelical perspective, the average self-identified "Christian" has that Biblical motivation to spend their money, time, and resources for those who are hurting. An example of this is the money that comes in to Samaritan's Purse International. While Samaritan's Purse received 35.4 million dollars from USAID

between 2004 and 2010, there is also a significant portion that comes from Samaritan's Purse's own resources and private donations of time, money, and equipment."³³ From this student's experience, private donations came into Samaritan's Purse the day after the typhoon hit the Philippines in excess of four million dollars. When it comes to the funds available most of the NGO's are financed through governments and USAID certainly is another large government funder of relief organizations. But it is the motivation of giving that marks the greatest difference between secular and Christian NGO's. Secular NGO's certainly have a variety of motivators for giving, but the Christian has one based at the very foundation of the heart and life, a motivation based on a Christian or Biblical worldview which affects the heart and mind deeply.

Three Types of Disaster Relief

Now that the varying motivations have been briefly discussed along with the varied approaches to disaster relief; what are the various types of disaster relief? Certainly it can be said that there are appropriate and inappropriate responses to various disasters that take place. Depending on what the disaster is, the appropriate response to alleviating the effects, one author points out, is either Relief, Rehabilitation, or Development.³⁴ It is helpful to categorize the appropriate response into one of these criteria so one can respond in the most helpful way possible. Otherwise, what some see as helping could be doing more harm than good, as history has proven.

³³ Bush, Obama, and a faith-based US Foreign policy. In *International Affairs* 88: 5 (2012) 953-974. The Royal institute of International Affairs. p15-16.

³⁴ When Helping Hurts, p99-100.

Relief

This is typically the appropriate response that NGO's face when they respond to a natural disaster. It can be defined as, "the urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural disaster or man-made crisis."³⁵ So, for example, when Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines in late 2013 the appropriate response of the world was to provide quickly jobs (for finances), immediate food, shelter, and such basic needs in order to stop the country from even more suffering or disease. The relief stage should also be temporary as it can create dependence and cause damage to the victims, hurting the local economy and creating an overly dependent or even entitlement mentality amongst the people. Although it is a difficult thing to determine, ideally, relief is supposed to be "provided only during the time that people are unable to help themselves."³⁶ Relief usually comes in the basic forms listed above and is usually meant to help save lives, and provide for people their basic needs following whatever natural or manmade tragedy has occurred.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation can take place towards the end of the initial Relief or shortly thereafter and "seeks to restore people and their communities to positive elements of their pre-crisis conditions."³⁷ This is the first step in empowering the local people to be their

³⁵ Ibid., p100.

³⁶ Ibid., p105.

³⁷ Corbett & Fikkert. When Helping Hurts, p100.

own providers, restorers, and to lead their own efforts of recovery. It is a working with the people, rather than doing everything for them. Rehabilitation could be seen as a type of mentoring that does not just give handouts, as in the initial relief, but has certain expectations of the victims and even brings them along to empower them and teach them to participate in their own rehabilitation. The current standards for disaster relief reflects this way of thinking and includes guidelines in their official ‘best practice’ document,

Minimum Standards of Disaster and Rehabilitation Assistance: Ensure participation of the affected population in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the assistance program. Conduct an initial assessment to provide an understanding of the disaster situation and to determine the nature of the response. Respond when needs of an affected population are unmet by local people or organizations due to their inability or unwillingness to help. Target assistance based on vulnerability and need, and provide it equitably and impartially, and aid workers must possess appropriate qualifications, attitudes, and experience to plan and effectively implement appropriate assistance programs.³⁸

Rehabilitation is a crucial phase of disaster relief, without it what is naively seen as relief, could be detrimental to the victims and future generations. It should also be said that this stage can be accomplished with greater or less difficulty depending on the culture and traditions, i.e. the mindset, of the local people.

Development

This stage in disaster relief, especially from the Christian perspective, is a holistic approach that takes the human soul, relationships, and God into account. Development is often seen as a mark attributed to a people or country that can provide money for

³⁸ Ibid., 106-107.

themselves and be materially prosperous. True development, however, at least according to Corbett and Fikkert,

Is a process of ongoing change that moves all the people involved – both the “helpers” and the “helped” – closer to being in right relationship with God, self, others, and the rest of creation...as the poor develop, they are better able to fulfill their calling of glorifying God by working and supporting themselves and their families with the fruits of that work. Development is not done for people or to people but with people.³⁹

True development is when a person is healthy enough and stable enough to not only be categorized as “helped” but also as “helper”. They begin to develop others. This is right in line with the Bible’s perspective on what it is to be a healthy God-follower, but that will be addressed later on. This is, in this author’s estimation, the right way to categorize and think through what disaster relief, truly is. But unfortunately, this mindset and the action behind it, does not seem to be taking place as a general rule. One author stated it this way, “One of the biggest mistakes that North American churches make – by far – is in applying relief in situations in which rehabilitation or development is the appropriate intervention.”⁴⁰ It is easy to throw money or resources at a problem. The difficulty comes in responding effectively and appropriately to disasters so that the people are left with not only needs met but with the ability and knowledge to continue on a path towards social, mental, spiritual, physical, and economic health.

³⁹ Corbett & Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*, 100.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 101.

Alarming Statistics

The sad reality is that many do not follow the previously mentioned model or worse still, do not seem to care at all, at least their actions would seem to indicate as much. However, the need has never been greater than it is today. According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) and the office of U.S. foreign disaster assistance (OFDA) there has been a 400% increase in natural disasters since 1985.⁴¹ Further, according to the Global Terrorism Database nearly 5,000 terrorist events occurred annually over the last 14 years.⁴² It should also be noted that as technologies increase and become more complicated, the scope of disasters can become more complex. For example, when the earthquake hit Japan, it was followed by a tsunami and then by a nuclear explosion.

Another alarming statistic is that there are over “2.5 billion people not served who are either the victims of a disaster or of poverty.”⁴³ It leaves a person wondering why this is the case and what can be done to combat it? If the church does not think ahead and plan to help before a disaster occurs than once it does, they will simply not be able to serve effectively those in need. For example, in 2011 an outbreak of tornadoes struck Tuscaloosa, Alabama, killing 123 people. Ninety percent of the people killed were members of their local church, and yet, not one of those churches had a plan for assisting the vulnerable, nor did they have any communication plan for a disaster.⁴⁴ Statistics such as these are alarming because they not only show an increase in disasters and sufferings

⁴¹ Wheaton College, Humanitarian Disaster Institute Handbook, pg 2.

⁴² <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

⁴³ When Helping Hurts – page 133.

⁴⁴ University of Alabama Survey. Wheaton Humanitarian Disaster Institute Handbook, page 2 of Section 3 “community Resilience and the church”.

but they also show an apparent lack of planning and preparedness on the part of the Church.

CHAPTER 3

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR DISASTER RELIEF

Foundation for Disaster Relief in the Church

Before a Christian or church can begin to think about devising a plan for disaster relief, the foundation, the worldview, the roots of belief, which form their motivations and which serve as a guide and impetus for their actions should be clarified and clearly understood. For the Christian, there is such a guide in the Word of God. The Word of God provides a template for the Christian. It is a historical document which points to the vision, direction, methodology, motivation, and even culture of relief work. This Chapter will briefly explore the foundations for such relief work as they are found in the Bible.

The church which was formed after Christ's resurrection finds its foundational beginnings in the book of Acts. In Acts 9:26-27 the first known relief work can be seen and carried out by none other than the Apostle Paul. Paul is collecting funds for the Jerusalem Church, which was in need. References to this collection of relief funds can be found in I Corinthians 16:1-4 where Paul explains,

Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

He is also seen explaining this in II Corinthians 8:1-9:15,

8 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I

testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵ And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. ⁶ So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷ But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you^[a]—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. ⁸ I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. ¹⁵ ...as it is written: "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little."

Again Paul mentions this disaster relief work in Romans 15:14-32:

¹⁴ I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another. ¹⁵ Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. ¹⁸ I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. ²⁰ It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. ²¹ Rather, as it is written:

"Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." ²² This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, ²⁴ I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵ Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. ²⁸ So after I have completed this

task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

³⁰ I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. ³¹ Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favorably received by the Lord's people there, ³² so that I may come to you with joy, by God's will, and in your company be refreshed.

Paul had a similar urgency and soberness about getting relief to those in need as many Christian NGO's do today, perhaps even more so, as he is seen in Romans 15:30-31 risking hostile forces in order to get the relief to its destination. So from the start, an example is given to Christian believers today that this mindset and behavior should be normal Christian thinking and action. The church is seen collecting resources, planning, and preparing to help those who are in need, and doing so with great urgency, determination, conviction, and effectiveness.

Luke 10:30-37

Of course, one of the greatest examples of relief work is found in a parable that Jesus, Himself, gave. This teaching not only communicates motive but also a methodology for disaster relief scenarios. In Luke 10:30-37 Jesus shares the story of a man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho and while traveling was robbed, stripped naked, beaten, and left for dead by the religious people of His day. Afterward, he was lying on the side of the road nearly dead. The story goes on to share how a variety of different religious people pass by and do not offer to help the hurting man. Finally, a Samaritan man, the outcast of their day, stops to help the nearly dead man. It becomes apparent, even at this point, as to the heart of what should be a church's or NGO's

motivation to help others. The story also illustrates that there should be a willingness to place one's own schedule or self-occupied "to-do" list on hold long enough to help others in need. A person must be willing to pause the urgent so as to make room for the important.

Moving on from this insight to motivation, some guidance in the methodology of relief work may be attained. It begins by observing the compassion which motivated the Samaritan. In other words, he allowed himself to feel the helplessness and hurt that the man was experiencing, not enough to debilitate him, but enough to feel a sincere compassion for him. The same should be true of each church or relief worker. One must not serve others in a purely mechanical, non-feeling, routine, harsh, cold manner, but in order to truly love them and care for them, the workers must allow themselves to feel a little bit of the magnitude of their circumstance. However, there must be a proper balance in this as well; just as the Samaritan illustrates, there should be compassion while staying on guard so that one is not debilitated. It is possible to feel such compassion and hurt on behalf of the suffering that one is left useless to help the individuals or the situation and become too emotionally involved to focus and get the work accomplished. This is a tension every relief worker must balance and keep in proper perspective. It is not easy, but it is necessary to be effective in disaster relief.

The methodology comes into play once more when we see what the Samaritan does. Luke 10:34 says that he (the Good Samaritan) went to him, bound up his wounds, and treated him with the equivalent of emergency medication. The first principle may seem simple; one must go to the person who has been affected by a disaster, as this is vital. The saints of old spoke of the 'ministry of presence', meaning, the power and

ministry of simply being present with others, simply being there. The relief worker must do what it takes, and this can be incredibly difficult and expensive, to be as close to the suffering people as possible. An example of this is given by God himself in Christ; when the disaster of sin had devastated mankind, Jesus Christ gave up the comforts of heaven and paradise to come to earth in human form and suffer with and for mankind. In order to be effective, NGO's must do the same, they must be as close to the hurting and affected people as possible.

Next, when the Good Samaritan arrived, he brought bandages and medicine with him. The principle here is that initial emergency materials should be brought to those in need, as soon as possible. It may not be everything they need, but it is what they need in order to survive. It covers the most basic and most urgent needs. What the people need most to survive is what should be focused on in relief work. Again this may sound simple, but in complex disasters, this can easily be forgotten amid complicated details and responses along with mounting needs. Many NGO's and other Christian and secular organizations have proved ineffective because they set the standard of relief too high. This can be seen when an NGO spends too much time, providing too high of quality relief, for too few people. As one who has spent time in post-disaster responses, this student can attest to the fact that it is not unusual for several NGO's to allow many days to go by before help is provided because of too much planning, too high quality, and getting lost in details. When given the option of helping 100 people with an inordinately high response, meeting every potential need as possible and giving them the best of all things, versus, helping 1,000 or 10,000 people quickly and with basic hygiene, food and shelter helps, the latter should always be chosen as opposed to the former. This principle

is seen in the Good Samaritan as he responded quickly and with the basics that were needed for survival.

Next, the Samaritan uses his donkey to transport the injured man, showing the sacrifice and the transportation elements in relief work. Again, this illustrates how relief work will involve the sacrifice of money, time, emotion, energy, and possibly more from the relief worker; as a church or an individual. This is yet another reason the example of Christ to the Christian is a powerful and helpful one. Relief work will cost. It involves the sacrifice of time, energy, sometimes health, money, and one's personal emotion, finances, and property. Transportation, as seen in the donkey transporting the injured man, can be one of the most difficult in a post-disaster area and yet it is absolutely vital as well. Each NGO has got to figure out how to get relief goods to those who need them and help transport such goods and the dead or injured as quickly as possible. Many times this involves thinking that is "out of the box" and very creative, it may also mean paying larger sums of money than would normally ever be spent, but must be done in order to get the people the supplies and help they need. This often times can be a very difficult task to accomplish, but as seen in the story of the Good Samaritan, a necessary part.

Finally, the Good Samaritan pays the money necessary to get the man back in good health. He even leaves money to provide for whatever may be necessary to help the injured man beyond his initial medications and housing, in order to see the man fully treated and healthy. Many NGO's only stay around while the cameras do, but as soon as the media stops covering and the money stops flowing, they leave. There is something to last part of Jesus' parable: that an element of continued care and help should be considered and followed through in some way. For Samaritan's Purse, this has looked

like building a hospital in South Sudan where there were not any hospitals to help the people. Another example would be building the seminary in South Sudan where, after responding to the violent civil war, it was recognized that a seminary for pastors would meet a huge need. There are also examples of orphanages being built or churches being built, but the lesson from the good Samaritan remains: that once Christians' respond to the initial medications and needs that they should look beyond that to what continuing needs the people will be facing. The final words of Christ during His earthly ministry, and his charge for all Christians, is to go and do likewise. Jesus Christ offers this story of the Good Samaritan and the command to 'go and do likewise' for every Christian. The story offers a picture of what the heart of Christian relief should look like, what the methodology of Christian relief work should be, and also what it should not look like. This biblical foundation for relief work contains both method and heart.

Second Corinthians 4:5

The Bible says in Second Corinthians 4:5 that, "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." This Biblical truth gets at the heart and motive of helping others, namely, a servant heart that follows the example of Jesus Christ. What the Apostle Paul is stating here is that the message they were consumed with was not a message all about them and how great they are, but rather, a message sharing the hope of true life in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Then he states that when it comes to themselves, their message is one of being a servant to others, because of Christ. So in short, serving others, for the Christian, is not as much an outward function of doing as it is an outward growth of what they are in their essence.

This makes a difference in the way the Church of Jesus Christ does relief work. When the outward working is connected with the inward being or becoming, there is a strength, motivation, and resolve that evidences itself in endurance, passion, steadfastness, and resolve that simply doing it for the sake of doing it, or being a good person cannot provide.

James 2:14-17

The book of James chapter two, verses 14-17 says:

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

In this passage of Scripture, the line is distinctly drawn in the Bible that if a person claims to be a Christian and yet, withholds relief, help, or love, for those who are hurting or in need, then they are a liar. For the Christian, according to the Word of God in the Bible, there is no such thing as a true Christian who does not somehow participate in helping others. This is a clarion call of sorts to every person in the world who claims to be a Christian; they must evidence that claim with the fruit of being involved in helping, serving and relieving those who are hurting. There is no other option. No one is excluded.

Isaiah 1:16-17; 58:1-10

From the Old Testament, there are several passages which lay the foundation for relief work. One such passage is found in Isaiah 1:16-17; 58:1-10 which says:

Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.

Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins. For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God.

They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ “Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness^[a] will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

The Christian would be hard pressed to find a passage of scripture which more clearly and powerfully articulates God’s call to what the Christian life should be. God Himself is speaking to His people here telling them in no uncertain terms that He expects and even commands them to feed the hungry, to take care of the refugee, and the orphan, to provide clothing, basic housing, and pay the workers a decent wage. He expects them to provide these things and more for the hurting and oppressed. God Himself tells them if they do these things then they will be heard by Him, and He will bless them and heal them.

But, if they are not living this kind of life God tells them not to bother even worshipping Him, because He will not accept it and further, He resents it. This is one of the most specific Biblical passages for the Christian and the Church. It makes it undeniably clear that God himself commands, expects, loves, and blesses relief work. It

is the Christian's duty, command, natural out-flowing, responsibility, and should be their joy.

Matthew 24:7-8

The Lord Jesus Himself prophesies in Matthew 24:7-8 that in the last days "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains." This can be matched up statistically with the steady increase in natural disasters worldwide. According to the Borgen Project, a nonprofit organization addressing poverty and hunger,

"Are natural disasters increasing? Yes. Natural disasters are unpreventable occurrences that take place, ranging from mild to absolutely destructive. In recent years, it may seem as if these storms have increased from prior decades. According to recent studies, it is true: the number of natural and geophysical disasters taking place each year is noticeably skyrocketing. Geophysical disasters include earthquakes, volcanoes, dry rock-falls, landslides and avalanches. Climatic disasters are classified as floods, storms, tropical cyclones, local storms, heat/cold waves, droughts and wildfires. In 1970, the average of natural disasters that were reported was 78; in 2004, this number jumped to 348. According to AccuWeather, since 1990, natural disasters have affected 217 million people every single year. From 1980 to 2009 there was an 80 percent increase in the growth of climate-related disasters. Between 2001 and 2010, more than \$1.2 trillion was lost to the increased rates of natural disasters. This was a dramatic rise, which between 1981 and 1990 had been roughly \$528 billion. With storms such as Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan, Hurricane Katrina, Hurricane Irene, as well as the tsunamis and earthquakes that plagued [Japan](#), a trend is apparent."⁴⁵

Also, according to Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, since the year 1900, there has been a steady increase in disasters from the teens to between four and 600 each year since the year 2000.⁴⁶ No matter the organization gathering the data, the results are all the same, a steady increase in disasters is undeniable.

⁴⁵ <http://borgenproject.org/natural-disasters-increasing/>

⁴⁶ <http://www.emdat.be/natural-disasters-trends>

Isaiah 61:1-6

Another key foundational scripture relating to disaster relief is found in Isaiah 61:1-6 where the Bible says:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. ⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. ⁵ Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks; foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; ⁶ but you shall be called the priests of the Lord; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast.”

From the time of the prophets of Old Testament to the New Testament and until today, the heart is consistently described as the fountain-head of all relief-type work. Never is relief work stronger and more effectual than when it comes from the heart and comes forth with great zeal and passion rooted in a Biblical worldview. This text of sacred scripture reveals the man of God describing this heart change. He begins where it must begin for all people, that the Spirit of God must first come upon the naturally selfish heart and begin its work of transformation. Once the heart has been effectually changed by the Spirit of God, His heart for mankind becomes the man's heart. He realizes he is anointed, or set apart, to share a message of Hope from God, as he seeks to bind up the wounds of the heart and not merely the body.

The end game for the man of God goes beyond meeting the physical needs of a people. This is a great distinction between a secular NGO and a Christian NGO, namely, going beyond the physical to the spiritual needs as well. This is why a Christian NGO

may remain in a disaster affected area longer (sometimes permanently) than makes financial or business sense, it is why a Christian NGO may develop other programs, while still meeting the physical needs, that bind up the broken-hearted and free people's hearts and minds, and give people a much greater hope that is far above and beyond any hope that may be present in the physical world. This type of "relief" work goes deeper, lasts longer, and generates greater health than any shelter, hygiene, food, or possessions could ever hope to bring on their own. Only a transformation of the heart can turn a man from seeing only his devastation, to that of looking upon the needs of others, even in his/her distress, and begin to 'rebuild the ancient ruins', and 'raise up former devastations'. The 'servant of God', in seeing the glory, the dignity, the love of God lift people from the ashes, finds his or her greatest reward. This becomes the motivation for the Christian NGO; it is why something beyond the physical help is sought, it is why they may stay longer, work harder and invest further in a people who have been struck by disaster. It is a direct result of the Spirit of God who is by definition the essence of goodness, as He changes the human heart, that heart becomes a conduit pouring into other hearts, rather than an end in themselves.

A New Testament counterpart to this passage in Isaiah can be found in Galatians 5:13-16 where the Bible says, "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

In this passage, the Bible is again referencing a type of service or love that is rooted in a change within, which the Spirit of God brings. A change which projects

outwardly what has taken root in the inward being. In both passages the Bible refers to relief work and ministry as to the freeing of captives or, as this passage takes it even further, using one's freedom (given by the Spirit) not on one's self selfishly, but using that heart change, using that emotional, spiritual, and mental freedom given by God to provide relief, help, and ministry to others. Christ then goes on to unpack yet another major theme of the Bible, found in the Old Testament and New Testament, namely, loving other people with the same love that one has for themselves. Otherwise, and here the Bible illustrates the negative repercussions of ignoring such a passage, both will be destroyed by each other's selfishness.

The Bible provides the foundation, motivation, and template for relief work. It is crucial, before a Christian or any Christian church begins to plan for disaster relief, that the foundation be established. The foundation, which has been illustrated here, provides the motivation, guide, and impetus necessary for the most effective kind of relief work in the world. The Bible provides the template for the Christian. It is a historical document which points to the vision, direction, methodology, motivation, and even culture of relief work. Not only Biblically but historically, one can clearly see that the Biblical worldview based on God's word has had the greatest effects on the world in the area of disaster relief work. It is why a Biblical foundation is essential. It is why one should never lose sight of where it all started. God gave.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO DISASTER RELIEF IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Overview of Issues

The church today has an incredible opportunity to provide relief to those experiencing disasters. With technology and travel being the best that it has ever been, infrastructure and logistical progress smoother and more expanded than ever before, getting relief to hard-hit areas, although still not easy, has never been in a better position to provide relief both rapidly and effectively. Further, as has been discussed, with the increase in disasters, the needs have never been more apparent. This is a privilege for the church as it is the most effective way to fulfill the Biblical command to treat others as one would want to be treated. Lives that are sacrificial and big-hearted are lives well lived.

The way a church does or does not respond, however, is also crucial to the meeting of other's needs in an effective and lasting way. There are many issues that those in disasters experience which the church has the capacity to respond to. From physical needs to spiritual and emotional needs, kingdom-minded churches must strategize to provide help to these hurting victims.

Effects of Passivism

Before moving any further, a hurdle must be addressed that the church faces in much of the prosperous areas of the world today. Although living in a stable and

prosperous country certainly has its benefits and blessings, it also has its dangers. An example of this is how passive America was leading up to World War II. America would have liked to have remained uninvolved in this war, simply referring to WWII as ‘someone else’s problem’, but as history records, it became more and more apparent that for America to remain uninvolved would have been a morally and governmentally unwise, corrupt decision. The same can be said for the church. Many churches, and therefore many Christians, especially those living in stable or prosperous countries, tend to remain uninvolved in the disasters of other countries, other peoples or other churches. This passive, morally bankrupt response to the hurting and needs of others can lead to the death and destruction of many more people affected by disaster. It also would eventually lead to one day, an absence of help from them towards the passive church itself. As Sir Edmund Burk often said, “All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”⁴⁷

Passivism breeds passivism and love breeds love, but for the church, it goes even deeper. The church is only as healthy and strong as its obedience to the mandates of the Bible and therefore, fulfills its mission in the world. Many would argue that America has been unprepared for certain disasters that have struck the mainland, the same has happened to the church at various times. This leads the Christian who desires to obey the Spirit of God and the word of God to not only desire to provide relief to those affected by disasters but also to train, prepare, and equip itself so that it is able to respond adequately when disaster strikes. Far from passivism, this Biblical worldview leads to aggressive preparation and proactive response preparedness which position the Church to be rapid, effective, and significant in its reaction to catastrophe and suffering. This is the primary

⁴⁷ https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Edmund_Burke.

catalyst for this research, and for this paper: that the church will not merely see the great need for its involvement in relief work but that it would also have a practical plan for how to prepare and what to do when such an event occurs, whether that be in preparation or implementation. This perspective is contrary and in complete opposition to the passivism that can be so pervasive in the church's ranks today, particularly in the prosperous west. But Christians are to live above the culture and times in which they find themselves. They are to live according to the Word of God and to a culture of mercy, work, love, and service and aggressive, effective, labors in the name of Jesus in the gutters and byways of this suffering world.

The question then becomes, "how?" How do churches and people move from passivism to effective obedience to God's word in ministering effectively to those who are hurting? A good first step is to learn from those who are already doing a similar work. Much can be learned from parachurch organizations whose focus is specifically, and often time on a grander scale, on disaster relief. Many of these organizations also provide help and training which most churches are not taking advantage. Their stories of relief work, their foundations, and their practical steps towards preparedness and relief can be learned from and even adopted by churches across the world, no matter how big or small those churches may be.

Organizations Providing Training for Church Leadership

Samaritan's Purse

The Samaritan's Purse (SP) Relief organization, founded by Robert Pierce and now led by the Reverend Franklin Graham has as their mission to “follow the example of Christ by helping those in need and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel.”⁴⁸ This organization has done a great job at effectively training church leadership in specific methods to use to assist those in need. For example, Samaritan's Purse extends their hand to any church leaders or lay people when a disaster hits to volunteer and meet the needs of others first hand. They provide the tools and networking necessary to respond to disasters throughout the United States and also internationally through their International Relief Department. Reverend Franklin Graham believes wholeheartedly in supporting and helping the local church to respond when disaster strikes. They provide training, tools, people, and resources to respond. A church can also sign up to be what they call a, “Lighthouse church,” where they can house and feed responders and also be a “Basecamp” for operations during a disaster that occurs in their area.

World Vision

World Vision was the first organization, founded by Robert Pierce, which seeks to provide emergency services to those in need. The mission of World Vision is “to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice, and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of

⁴⁸ www.samaritanspurse.org.

God.”⁴⁹ World Vision seeks to fulfill their mission by focusing on transformational development that is based in communities and which is sustainable. They also make it a priority to help as a matter of first priority the most vulnerable, which most of the time tends to be young children. They provide emergency relief that comes along side those who have been affected by a disaster or some kind of conflict. By promoting justice in this kind of work, they will be working in direct opposition to the systems which effect the poor in a negative way. Accomplishing this is no easy task, so World Vision partners with local churches in order to contribute to spiritual and social transformation that is sustainable. Further, they work to increase public awareness that leaders need to inform understanding, giving, involvement, and prayer. All of this in order to witness to Jesus Christ’s work, his deeds, his life-giving word, which in turn will encourage people to respond to the Gospel which alone produces sustainable heart change and reconciliation.⁵⁰

It is important to point out that this organization places high importance on partnering with churches to fulfill their mission. They see that in order to accomplish their task the church must be involved and that in order to provide help that is sustained beyond the initial disaster response the church is critical.

World Help

Another Christian humanitarian organization is World Help. World Help was started in 1991, by Dr. Vernon Brewer, out of a desire to continue the God-given vision to bring physical help and spiritual transformation for millions of impoverished people on

⁴⁹ www.worldvision.org

⁵⁰ Ibid.

every corner of the world. The mission of World Help is “to serve the physical and spiritual needs of people in impoverished communities around the world.”⁵¹ Local churches can request a speaker from this organization to come and share about ways to get involved and to provide help to those in need.

SBC - IMB

The Southern Baptist denomination seeks to do a lot with the International Mission Board to partner with churches and to send out missionaries to specific areas in need of physical and spiritual help. The mission of the International Mission Board has always been to share the gospel with those who are lost.⁵² Specifically, the SBC of Virginia hosts disaster trainings throughout the year at a variety of locations to prepare local churches and individuals to respond effectively to disasters. They also have training materials called, “Ready Church” on their website which are specifically tailored to local churches on how to prepare them for floods or hurricanes. A church can either respond with the SBCV or use their training to respond adequately on their own in the churches very own communities.

God’s Pit Crew

Founded in 1991 by Randy and Terri Johnson in North Carolina, God’s Pit Crew has grown rapidly in a relatively short period of time. Its mission is to:

Deliver hope, love, and healing in a world of devastation to those effected by crisis. God’s Pit Crew has delivered and helped to distribute tens of millions of

⁵¹ www.worldhelp.net

⁵² www.imb.org

pounds of relief supplies (water, hygiene items, cleaning supplies, food, diapers, etc) into disaster areas. Their volunteers have cut thousands of trees which had fallen onto people's homes, gutted houses, patched roofs, totally rebuilt homes and churches and they have prayed with people and given them hope in their time of need. They have responded to 71 disasters in 23 states and 5 countries (highlighted in red). Since January 1, 2012, we have distributed 5,050 Blessing Buckets.”⁵³

Churches can be involved as teams or as individuals in this organization. Also, they recognize the vital place of the local church in relief efforts and in order to be sustainable. They show support for the local church and are willing to share their information with any church striving to accomplish a similar vision in their own areas.

North American Mission Board

The mission of a Southern Baptist Disaster Ready Church is to be prepared in the event of a disaster, connect with resources and potential disaster response partners, and respond when disaster strikes.⁵⁴ They provide online, step by step instructions and training so that local congregations can be prepared for disaster and individual families can be prepared as well. They also hold periodic training throughout the United States, which they encourage churches and individuals to attend. A church can also follow their suggestions and guidelines in order to prepare ‘survival kits’ in advance so as to be ready with supplies for when disaster strikes and can offer to be a host church for training as well.

⁵³ www.godspitcrew.org

⁵⁴ <http://www.namb.net/readychurch/>

ANM

Since the early 1990's, Advancing Native Mission's driving vision has been to help indigenous missionaries and to fulfill Christ's Great Commission of Matthew 24:14 in order to reach the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, their goal is to mobilize native missions to reach the unreached peoples of the earth with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is done by maintaining focus on prayer, serving others before one's self, and loving one another while being very careful to honor God in integrity, relationships, innovations, and stewardship. This organization trains the church on weekends through what they call BKT events – Building the Kingdom Together. They also hold conferences throughout the world in which they gather native pastors in order to encourage them and train them for ministry.

Curriculum and Online Resources Utilized to Equip and Train Leaders

There is a need for more curriculum to equip and train leaders. The church has an opportunity to provide resources to assist people who have a desire to help those facing disasters but just do not know how. Training is essential for effective disaster relief efforts. Wheaton College was the first Christian college in the United States to establish its own Disaster Relief Institute. Wheaton College does a great job of training leaders. Wheaton has published a manual entitled, *Light Our Way: A Guide for Spiritual Care in Times of Disaster*. This manual was designed specifically for disaster response volunteers, first responders to disasters and disaster planners. The purpose of the manual

was “to inform, encourage and affirm the hundreds of thousands of disaster responders who put their personal plans and routines on hold in the event of a local or national disaster.”⁵⁵ The manual consist of seven sections: Basic concepts of spiritual care, types of spiritual care, emotional care and its relationship to spiritual care, spiritual care in long-term recovery stage of disaster, emotional and spiritual care for the care giver, mitigation, preparedness, planning and training as spiritual care components, and summary and a look toward the future of disaster spiritual care.⁵⁶

There is a tremendous need for the local church to glean from mission agencies whose mission and heartbeat is to train leaders in disaster relief efforts. As churches learn from these agencies, they would be able to write curriculum on disasters to equip the church body specifically in meeting needs of others. In the manual published by Wheaton College, the last section focused on online resources. The resources listed in this manual would aid the church when helping those going through disasters. These resources are noted in the appendix.⁵⁷

As one can see, there are many online resources to help train the local church in this needed area. The entire mission of the Humanitarian Disaster Institute is “to equip congregations and faith-based organizations for disasters domestically and internationally.”⁵⁸ Wheaton College provides a tremendous model for the church through the Humanitarian Disaster Institute.

⁵⁵ *Light Our Way: A Guide for Spiritual Care in Times of Disaster*. Wheaton College: 2006. Pg.7.

⁵⁶ Ibid. pg.7.

⁵⁷ See Appendix 1.

⁵⁸ Training Seminar presentation by Jamie D. Aten. Wheaton College, June 2014.

CHAPTER 5

A STRATEGIC PLAN OF DISASTER RELIEF FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH TO IMPLEMENT

Qualitative Data

Kevin King

Executive Director, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)

Kevin King is the Executive Director of the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). At the age of twelve, King saw a film about the starving masses in Africa and wondered how a God who loved him as His child could have other children who were starving. This eventually led to his adulthood request of God to “use me for the rest of my life combating world hunger and poverty.” After many years of international service, King leads MDS, which deploys volunteers throughout the United States and Canada with a primary focus on long-term rebuilding.

The Importance of & Motivation for Christian Disaster Response

King feels there is a two-fold importance in bringing aid to people following a disaster: meet their physical and spiritual needs. He states that the Gospel tells us to let our light shine before all men, not so that relief organizations gain praise, but that God would be praised for what He has done through relief workers’ actions. King believes that Christian relief workers are motivated by their compassion, obedience to Scripture, and gratefulness to God.

The Philosophy for Christian Disaster Response

A key principle according to King, is that responders must treat beneficiaries with dignity and respect as fellow image bearers of God. Further, they must also recognize that every situation is different and so responders should not assume what the needs are but should rather conduct research in order to assess the needs and determine what the most effective response would be. King ties these two key principles together by stating:

A key word that always comes to me is; if it's done with dignity versus a metaphor I sometimes think of growing up on the farm was 'slopping the hogs.' You just take whatever scraps came off the table and say 'Here pigs, if you're hungry enough, you'll eat it and have at it'. Versus doing research and figured out what's best for them. It may look different for every particular situation. So, you need an assessment. You can't assume what the needs are. Relief means getting an honest assessment from the ground of what people need. Internationally speaking, sometimes it's not even giving 'in kind' stuff; it's maybe cash because then that gives them the dignity to purchase locally and stimulate the local economy.

The Ideal Christian Disaster Response

King was then asked to articulate what the ideal Christian response might look like for an organization or church. He tried to emphasize that disasters are local, in the sense that, all responders should recognize that they are visitors and that they, most likely, will be leaving in a relatively short period of time. It is precisely because of this that relief workers should seek, from the very beginning, to support the local infrastructure and ultimately to build up their capacity for the immediate and the long-term response. Churches should be sought out and asked, 'How can we help you?' In King's estimation, the ideal situation involves a long-term recovery committee to be set up to process any unmet needs in the community. These needs would have emotional, spiritual, and physical components. They would decide whose homes need rebuilding, or whose

home needs a wheelchair ramp, or who needs financial assistance, or who needs education. The end goal of this is to build the local church's capacity for ministry in such a way that when all the relief organization leave, the church has been strengthened.

King also noted that he sees disaster response as separate from church planting, but acknowledges that churches are sometimes raised up in response to relief workers' lifestyles and their concern for all people, no matter their stage of life: "We are not here to plant churches. We are not here even to take people out of their churches and put them into action. But if we can encourage spiritual development and encourage people's walk with God through our actions, thanks be to God for that, but that is not our mission."

Church Preparedness for Christian Disaster Response

Pastor Preparedness:

Mr. King's first admonition when I talk with pastors is that they should not try to be all and everything in a disaster response. Many pastors have been through this and burned out because they felt a disaster response was the moment they had to step up and prove their worth. Instead of this perspective the pastors should recognize that they are not alone and that there is a supportive network of organizations (many with special niches) that are there to help. In addition to this, pastors should not feel that they need to study up or be a disaster response expert, but instead, continue to be faithful to their ministry. Pastors are the gatekeepers to their congregations, but when it comes to disaster or relief responses; the only thing they have to do is facilitate a meeting with subject matter experts, open it up and bless it, and set the tone by

making the church aware that it needs to learn about disaster response and make space for it in its outreach. Gather a group of brothers and sisters around to support. Once the church is aware, encourage congregants to commit to one or two practical ways that they will help or serve.

Congregant Preparedness:

When it comes to congregational preparedness King's advice is for the church to sponsor a three hour Disaster 101 training class with breakfast provided. During this session invite the Red Cross and other subject matter experts to speak to the congregation about topics that that particular community may be vulnerable to such as what to expect emotionally after a disaster, what things could be done in advance to prepare, what items should the church keep on hand to have ready for such a response, what agencies are available to assist, and what emergency numbers may be needed as well as the need to share the contact information of the church's point persons.

The local pastor should discover how churches and pastors can assist during a disaster by working with Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VALs), which some states utilize to liaise between faith-based and non-profit groups with the government. In addition to this if a church has a childcare program, the families who are potential victims of a disaster should be noted.

Inter-Church Preparedness:

Another area of preparation which would be of tremendous advantage during a disaster is the area of inter-Church preparedness. King's advice is to arrange for local pastors to meet every

two months to discuss joint preparedness and to develop relationships. This kind of communication must happen before a disaster; otherwise, it is really tough afterward, especially when senses, smells, sounds, and even a sense of anger are heightened by the disaster.

Material Preparedness:

There is much that can be gained from stocking up on certain items prior to a disaster. Needed supplies such as tools that could be easily maintained and helpful for responses, as well as the basics of shovels, rope, and the like. In addition to supplies being stocked, Kevin King suggests that the churches approach local hardware store and other stores for donations such as money or items, giving them an opportunity to minister to their community. What many people do not realize is that many stores have a certain amount of discretionary spending that is allowed especially during disaster type of occurrences. Churches should also utilize a crew of its members who can provide their own chainsaws and other tools to aid in the response. Many churches already have certain facilities such as showers and bathrooms that can be used to minister to communities in their time of need, and if they do not, this would be a great way to prepare to help in this way. If a pastor has a large church with the needed physical space, the funds to accomplish it, the access to a few electricians, and the vision for the church to be a feeding center or a temporary shelter, the pastor and the church should consider purchasing a generator and install hook-ups with a throw switch so they can continue to serve and help even when there is no power.

The Importance of & Motivation for Christian Disaster Response

Jordan Lycan

Director of Disaster Response, Bethel Church

Lycan is presently Director of Disaster Response for Bethel Church in California and oversees their short-term missions. She was formerly the Disaster Response Technical Advisor for Samaritan's Purse (SP), and a Program Officer for World Relief in their Disaster Response Unit.

Lycan connected the motivation for disaster relief and its importance with a Biblical worldview and with the fact that the Word of God illustrates his heart for this kind of work. God is compassionate and takes action to bring love and support, relief and rehabilitation, into the most difficult of situations. She went on to share how Christians who follow God and have His Spirit dwelling in them gives them that same heart and "It becomes part of the DNA the Lord has put into every Christian." When Christ-followers step out and serve humanity in this way, God will always meet them there and be their supply. As intimidating as disasters can be, believers can have confidence because the Lord has called people to respond in this way. Christians have an ending just like in Isaiah 61. The Lord's heart is for the broken and the needy, and His heart is that they do not stay broken and needy. As people of faith take that step of faith and serve in this area, the Lord will meet them there and He is going to be more than is needed, more than the situation needs. Everything that is needed is in Jesus. Disasters can be intimidating, but they should not be intimidated by doing something the Lord has empowered them to do. As Christians

learn who the Lord is, they will gain confidence in light of the intimidation of disaster response. The Lord is a banner, sword and shield, and the solution.

The Philosophy for Christian Disaster Response

The philosophy of disaster response is one that is rooted in God's outpouring of His love. The people of God are called to be where people are and when they are in need. This is their identity, it is their philosophy, it is exactly what God did for humanity in Christ and what He has done throughout human history.

There are these different stages of disaster response, and depending on the disaster life cycle being looked at, it is easy to divide people and situations up into relief, recovery, mitigation, and preparedness. However, it is not quite as divided as people would like to make it. Christian relief is really an outpouring of God's heart into each unique situation. How one responds in the relief phase has a lot to do with how one responds in the community before an event actually happens. It is just much more accelerated. There is not a technical answer to the question; believers are just called to be where people are and when they are in need, and the relief phase, right after an event is has taken place, is most definitely where Christ-followers are to be. It is that time when we need the love of God must be shown. One of the greatest gifts that can be given to people is just to be there, the ministry of presence. This is both in terms of caring; being carriers of Jesus' love as His followers, and in carrying His presence to those who are hurting. But it is also the physical ministry of being present when somebody is in need, almost like a solidarity with that, that they're not being forgotten. That is a place of great hope for people, and that's exactly where Christians need to be. Sometimes vulnerabilities and behavior can exacerbate the impact of a disaster, and there is a tremendous opportunity when

somebody is in need, and one has the opportunity to walk alongside them to help them rebuild and in some ways to rethink their recovery and rehabilitation process, moving forward. It is difficult to do that if Christian responders not there when they are in need.

The Ideal Christian Disaster Response

Jordan believes that the ideal Christians disaster response involves an immediate relief phase but must also consider the long term thriving of the victims as well. In order to see this long-term result, the local church, civic organizations, and governmental entities must be involved as well to empower the people and cause them to flourish.

As a believer, one needs to consider what the Lord's standard is and what He desires for people. Saving lives and reducing suffering is really important for the relief phase, but the long-term hope and plan is to see people thrive. For that to happen, the end goal must be kept in mind throughout the response. Responders need to walk alongside local churches, civic groups, and governments, empowering them, preparing them, helping prepare them to flourish into who they are and the fullness God wants for their community. Partnership is critical. Granted, at times, all that is needed is to get relief items distributed, but at other times, restraint must be practiced in order to be sensitive to the long-term goal of thriving. So much thought must go into the response so that the ultimate health and thriving of a people are kept at the forefront and as the vision for the response.

Church Preparedness for Christian Disaster Response

As churches respond to a disaster they must not only focus on the physical and material preparedness, but they must also learn to deepen their response through coping mechanisms as well. This can be done by determining how they can be of service to the community in areas such as prayer and counseling. Church leaders need to know their congregants so they can encourage them to be the family Christ desires for them to be. This will be vital in preparing them to be a social structure for victims of a disaster. Further, they should make their congregants aware of where they can access assistance during a disaster as well as how they can serve others. Some other ways that church leaders can prepare their churches for response is by increasing social networking within the community, conducting community vulnerability assessments; and not limiting vulnerability considerations to natural or national disasters only; because a disaster can be anything that is a stress upon the church or community. Additional help could be informing the congregants of practical preparedness (e.g. packing lists, “go kits,” etc.), creating a task force within the church by appointing members of both genders and of various ages, and races and have them identify the needs of the community and make a game plan, creating a volunteer management structure within the church and assign specific roles, and by leaning on relationships by inviting others to meet and evaluate whether or not the church is seeing the true needs in the community.

Church leaders must determine what gaps of service are within the community and how the church can step in to fill those gaps. Preparing for and responding to disasters is also a great way to break down denominational walls by working with other churches and dividing up the response into sectors of response. A pastor can call the denomination of his or her church and ask

if they have a framework of a template for designing the response program and a phone number for someone who has done it before and can share lessons learned. The local Chapters of the Red Cross should also be contacted, and the Salvation Army, or other disaster groups, including local emergency management services, to see what they offer in terms of training. Many times there is free training available. Some of them even have on-line materials. Pull from their materials what is important to the church and each church can create their own training modules. In order to keep the church and church leaders from being overwhelmed the steps should be made simple. One way to do this is by establishing a simple guideline to follow and a schedule for them to follow. If it is not made simple, it can easily become a massive, intimidating project that doesn't need to be.

Jordan went on to affirm that when I come to preparedness the easy thing to do is just to focus on the physical aspects of having materials and responding with such. And although those types of things are extremely important, there is a lot that can be done to help beyond the physical. For example, the coping mechanisms can be deepened so that when a disaster hits, it is not felt as deeply as it otherwise would be. People tend to weather through disasters better when they are not alone; when they have a social structure around them or a family around them. They know that they are included, that they are not forgotten. So things like making sure a pastor or church leader knows who is in their congregation, that they have got a place of stability when they are in need; and they know where they can go for help. However, it does not end there, they also have a place where they can go and serve those in need. No one is just a victim, but they are also a part of the solution. So there is not a need to put a lot of money into only the physical aspects of a response, the response is bigger than that, it also becomes a natural and healthy outpouring of the church. Therefore, increasing the social networks in the community well

before a disaster takes place, and having phone trees of who is where, and even looking in one's own community and doing some vulnerability assessments are all a part of this more effective response. A large portion of this type of response and preparedness can be applied to when it's not a national disaster. An example of this is if a factory closes down in a church's town and there are twelve people who have just lost work; that is a disaster for that town. At that point the church should do a vulnerability assessment of where the people are economically, where they are socially, where they are with regard to violence in the community, where are the places where people tend to be more on the fringe of having issues, and what the plan should be based on these questions. And so, continuing the illustration, if that factory closes down, does anyone know who is affected and who is in need, and are the churches poised to go out there and walk with them, and help them find a solution in their lives? That does not take a lot of money, but it does take some effort upfront. Looking at the social, family, and economic coping mechanisms before a disaster hits, so when an event does hit, it is just not felt for as long.

When it comes to the physical aspects, Lycan emphasizes that there is a lot that can be done in terms of letting people in the congregation know of appropriate packing lists, or preparing a 72-hour 'go kit' if they are stuck by themselves in their house; and things like a generator, or other preparedness in order to prepare themselves for disaster. Church leaders need to think through things like: how their particular church can be prepared so that they are a service area to their community, what a ministry of prayer or counseling may look like in a disaster response, and how they can be a distribution point where they are doing warehousing or service. These kinds of questions are helpful in getting the pastors and their churches prepared for disaster. The Red Cross is also available to be met with beforehand, and one can find out if the other aid providers are getting together, and where there may be gaps where the church can

step in and be of service. Volunteers should be identified and if something were to happen in a church's community the people would know who to call and where to rally. These are basic steps that can be vital and helpful if communicated beforehand and communicated well.

At this point, a pastor may feel impassioned to follow through with some of these steps toward preparedness, but he is also likely to feel overwhelmed by the many pastoral tasks that he has on his plate as well as having a very limited personnel. To the pastor in this situation, Lycan suggests creating a volunteer structure that can manage the preparedness. She recommends learning from the U.S. Government's incident command system structure. By looking at their roles, one can learn rather quickly how to delegate effectively and organize even without there being a disaster. It is important to note that a disaster for a smaller church or community does not have to be a large-scale event, it can be anything that puts stress on the church or community, such as a major factory closing down or a power outage which lasts several days or weeks. When such an event occurs, the pastor could put his preselected team into action, what some call standing them up, and these people, begin to take action in how to appropriately respond to the situation. Within this team would be a point person, someone who deals with communication, someone who interacts with the congregation, and someone who handles the logistics of the response. This set up puts the congregation in a very good place to respond effectively and quickly when disaster strikes.

In Lycan's experience, working inter-denominationally has been easy and extremely healthy. "As the body of Christ, we're called to serve; as the body of Christ, we're called to represent Jesus. And those are the main things." Dividing the response up by sectors is good. Identifying, who is the contact person for each denomination, makes communication much easier and more effective as well. The ability to work with non-Christian faiths would

depend on where the church is and what is trying to be accomplished. For some responses partnering with other Christian faiths would be appropriate for an effective reaction to the disaster, but for some others, depending on how vast the chasm of doctrinal congruity, this could also be more of a challenge or hindrance.

There is a necessary balance which must be achieved between messaging and works within the Christian disaster response. What is meant here is that within the Christian ideal, which is rooted in the Bible, the Christ follower is called by God to love others and serve them with radical hospitality as well as to share the message of hope with them and to ultimately make disciples. Each response is different and so will be the proportion of the Christian's ability to speak the word in discipleship and to work out their Christian identity in actively showing mercy and kindness to others. Although it will change depending on the people, culture, response, and other mitigating factors, a balance between word and deed should always be striven for by each Christian.

It should be noted that both the Word of God spoken in preaching, sharing, and discipleship, as well as the Word of God acted out through mercy type ministries, are all equally important and are all equally rooted in a relationship with Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, however, many a Christian NGO (non-government-organization) has fallen into one of either extreme: a message without appropriate action, or an action, without a clear message. There is a strong pull toward a humanist response which seeks to help and serve while never sharing anything of the true hope of salvation and of how to be fully whole, healthy, and blessed. Of course, according to Jesus Christ, this is to be expected in this world. Further, people can easily fall into a false salvation as well in which someone feels as though their salvation is found in works, or in an organization, or in some other type of "savior" other than Jesus. This pitfall of salvation through

good works should be guarded against vehemently. On another extreme is the Christian NGO that ties their aid to an agenda. This is equally bad because whether it is intentional or not it turns the people into statistics and acts as though their salvation is somehow the tradeoff for them receiving help. People should never feel as though they are merely part of an agenda to proselytize a people without any sincere care for them as individuals. They should sense the genuine love of Christ in those who are responding and then the natural outflow of that genuine love is sharing an even greater rescue story of the Messiah who came to save them from even greater pain and destruction. To this point, the Christian should give God the ultimate responsibility for both the physical and the spiritual salvation of the beneficiaries. They should not feel it on their shoulders as a responsibility to convert everyone, but rather, they should show the love of Christ in word and in deed with a sincere heart to love others and then leave the rest to God.

As earlier mentioned, Kenny Isaacs of Samaritan's Purse always has said, "The quality of our work is the platform for our message." This should be the creed of every Christian responder in that their goal is to provide quality service and help to the beneficiaries as an act of worship to God. The responder should never make the response about themselves but should rather keep their focus on the community at large. This should be true regardless of whether the effected people accept Christ or not. Miss Lycan put it this way, "They are both are mandates. If we love the Lord without loving people, it's unfulfilled; if we love people without loving the Lord, it's unfulfilled. So, my opinion is that first of all our response has to come from a relationship and an encounter with Jesus." She continued to affirm that it is when that message gets muddled, that the rest of the response gets muddled as well. If relief workers are not careful, and lean too strongly on plans, and too strongly on human indicators for success then the disaster response

can take up a humanist tinge. Although the human indicators are very important for quality work, they have the potential to cause responders to disassociate themselves from the mandate to love the Lord, and to recognize and be fueled from that, rather than finding their salvation in their human philosophy. Responders and NGO's can easily drift that way, and so that is why keeping those mandates as foremost throughout a response is critical for them as believers. Christians not the saviors; but they are called to be there, and they are called to love, but they are not called to save them. Jesus is the Savior, every NGO and every Christian should make sure their message points them to the true Savior and not merely to their individual organization or their individual philosophy. This perspective takes a lot of pressure off just realizing that the Lord has called each Christian to be there. They do not have all the answers, but they do know God, and they know that He is enough for any disaster, and so they can find relief in giving Him the ultimate responsibility. The Christian is called to follow God into the hurting and dark areas, but as they go they go in obedience with their skills and their talent, and they are going to be wise as they can, but ultimately God is the one that is going to have to save these people's, and these communities, not the NGO's or Christians.

Sometimes the emphasis on messaging can result in a lack of quality in the services delivered. Lycan emphasizes that a form of worship is the application of the skills and the giftings that God has given to each Christian. If the Christian holds back from providing quality work, it is holding back an act of worship. When it comes to messaging versus the quality of one's work, it doesn't have so much to do with finding this perfect balance between both as it does finding a fullness in each. Fullness, the excellence of our relief work, is high-quality aid that is at a professional standard or even, what should be the case for believers, an even higher standard. When it's time to share Jesus with a people the Christian knows the appropriate time

and are sensitive to the appropriate time. Their desire is to see people thrive and knowing Jesus helps people thrive. However, at the same point, one should always be careful not to tie aid to an agenda of cramming a message down somebody's throat. The Lord is the one that takes that seed and cultivates it. Lycan said,

I think that is an important thing for the church also. The service of providing relief is not just about us as believers, but it is a really amazing way for us to show love and to lay down our lives, and to make sure that our service is not just for ourselves but that it is for the community at large as well, whether or not they come to Jesus. They are still going to be served and loved on well.

Terry Harmon

International Field Staff Support Team Manager, Samaritan's Purse International Relief

As the International Field Staff Support Team Manager, Terry Harmon and his team supports the work of the Projects Department's international field offices. He has been involved in disaster relief efforts for twenty years and has served there in various capacities. He has served in logistics for World Medical Mission as well as SP's disaster responses to earthquakes in Haiti, Japan, and the current refugee crisis in Greece where he is presently stationed. He also serves in an on-site administrative and managerial role with SP's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) where he has worked in Kosovo, the tsunami in the Philippines, and in the earthquake in Nepal.

He believes that the most important aspect of bringing people relief following a disaster is first and obviously, meeting the physical needs of the victims. He believes this is paramount, particularly within the first few hours, days, and weeks of a response, and the timeliness and quality and success with which we accomplish that task will potentially open other doors of

ministry and response, including evangelism and longer-term community development. James 2:15-16 states, “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?” Terry believes Christian’s must meet the immediate physical needs before beneficiaries can even begin to think of opening up to other possibilities.

As for his calling and burden for disaster relief Terry has worked for a number of years in the secular, academic community and was considering a teaching career when he felt impressed by God to pursue ministry work. He didn’t initially know that would involve working with a Christian non-profit organization involved in humanitarian and disaster relief, but over time, he came to see it as a calling for this particular season of his life, however long or short that may be. Whether responding internationally or domestically, including in his community or neighborhoods or just down the street, he believes God calls Christians into relationships with people and that His Word commands them to love victims of disaster and to provide for them as they are given the ability and opportunity.

With all of his years of disaster relief, if Mr. Harmon could speak with pastors and advise them as to what they should know about disaster relief he would share with them that, although they might not typically think of disaster response as an activity of the church, it is an effective outreach of the Body of Christ and everyone can play a role. There is more than enough work to go around when people are in need, and pastors and churches can be effective mobilizers of disaster responses. It will require planning and taking the time to reflect on the situation (even future, yet to occur situations) and see where the needs are or might be. There may be duplications in efforts, so pastors should try to avoid those in favor of gaps of service where needs are not being addressed. A pastor should know his own people’s giftings, talents, and

abilities, as well as his own, and consider how those might be most effectively used, whether that be, for example, manual labor or the ministries of prayer and presence.

When asked what would disaster planning experts want churches/pastors to know about disaster relief, Terry's response was to tell them that they do not need to recreate the wheel. There are numerous disaster response organizations, trainings, and materials that can help churches jumpstart their disaster response strategy or program within their individual church. Churches and pastors should not venture into a response without proper preparedness as, depending on the situation, there may be certain protocols and processes that need to be followed or certain attitudes and sensitivities that need to be exhibited, but neither should they feel they have to be experts with extensive coursework in disaster response under their belts. Lay people, with foundational knowledge and basic training, can be effective responders, but the church needs to provide the opportunity and means for its members to receive that knowledge and training.

In responding to disaster the Church should keep in mind what effective relief work involves. First of all, without the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the forefront of a church's efforts, their response will look no different from that of a secular relief organization, and perhaps no different from the world. Responding in Jesus' Name is what distinguishes Christian relief. The activities of Samaritan's Purse are based upon five distinct objectives: a) proclaiming the Gospel, b) serving with excellence, c) responding with compassionate action, d) demonstrating Biblical integrity, e) walking in bold faith.

Christian relief looks different in a variety of contexts. To aid in understanding what an appropriate response is in these contexts Mr. Harmon first explained that one thing to note in each of the scenarios below is that there will often be entities that have been designated to

coordinate response activities and assign sectoral responsibilities (e.g. UNHCR in an international response, FEMA in a U. S. national response, or state/county governmental or emergency management agencies in a more localized response). Even though these are secular groups, Christian relief organizations must often coordinate with them. But this can be a necessary and healthy collaboration, with opportunities even among the response providers for an effective Christian witness and a chance to demonstrate the love of Jesus to response colleagues.

Disasters that hurt others (the Nations)

Not that this same principle does not apply in a domestic context, but particularly as it relates to international responses, we must be very cognizant of cultural differences and contextual nuances. Christians cannot respond, even with compassionate Christian intent, with an ethnocentric attitude, expecting to do things as we would “at home.” And even though one of Christianity’s objectives is to proclaim the Gospel, Christian responders have to exercise some level of restraint. For example, and as stated before, one must first meet immediately the physical needs of those who are hurting (i.e. “save lives and reduce suffering”). And not that one only meet these needs in order to share the Gospel, but for sure, very few people who are physically hungry and hurting will have the capacity to focus on the Gospel message until they have been physically cared for. Christian responders also need to ensure that they do their work as unto the Lord; that is, with the highest degree of quality possible. They should aim to treat beneficiaries with the dignity and affirm their human worth as well as their worth in God’s eyes. The goal should be to treat and love them as they would want to be treated and loved. Once more, as SP’s

Vice President of International Programs and Government Relations, Ken Isaacs, has often stated, “The quality of our work is the platform for our witness.”

Disasters in one’s own backyard. (Where we are)

Responding to disasters in a more localized context may be easier in terms of not having to deal with the same lack of infrastructure that is found in developing nations or having to address as many cultural differences (although some will still exist from community to community or even within the same community), but responders must still demonstrate good judgment, wisdom, and sensitivity. A unique aspect of localized response, particularly if a church within the community is responding, is that the church has ideally already established a presence and a reputation for quality outreach in non-disaster response ways. Meeting the needs of one’s neighbors offers a very precious opportunity to both build upon and deepen pre-established relationships as well as to initiate new relationships. And whereas international responses dictate that, at some point these NGO’s must exit the country, leaving behind the chance to continue in-person relationships and newfound friendships, local responses allow the opportunity for those relationships and friendships to continue. Whether an international or domestic response, one of the goals should always be to strengthen the reputation and outreach capacity of the local church. Internationally, that will be churches who carry on the work after responders have left; while domestically, it will be churches of which the Christian responders are members themselves, so, the continuing work following a domestic response will keep involving them.

When it comes to communication between churches before, during, and after a disaster, Mr. Harmon points out that will not naturally happen. Some churches and denominations can be quite exclusive and disinclined to collaborate with other churches and denominations, so there has to be an investment of time to build those relationships. Mr. Harmon reminisced of something an old friend of his used to tell him, “Transparency builds trust, trust builds teams, and teams take time.” He also shared that a person cannot expect this collaboration and teamwork to happen last minute, particularly in relation to a disaster response. Responses require considerate collaboration prior to a disaster occurring. If various denominations within a community are to work together, they must have a plan and a strategy for doing so, and this will not happen as an afterthought. During a response, whether the response involves only one church or multiple churches, communication is key in the assigning of roles and the division of tasks. Otherwise, each person is doing merely going to do what is right in their own eyes, and this will likely result in duplication of efforts or gaps in service.

Responding groups should coordinate by regularly sharing what they have accomplished so that the subsequent days’ response plans can move forward successfully. After a response, all the churches and denominations that collaborated should conduct after-action reviews (AARs) to discuss lessons learned, as well as what went well, and what could be improved for future responses. Finally, PRAYER should be exercised by all involved and saturate every level of a response; before, during, and after.

When it comes to a culture of disaster relief in the local church, Mr. Harmon was asked his thoughts on what can promote such a culture and how to sustain it. He responded by saying that in order for a church to create a culture of disaster relief in their congregation the leadership and the makeup of the church must be philosophically pointed that direction. It should also be noted that disaster response is merely one of many ways to show the love of Christ to others. It is a “meetings of needs” on which Scripture places emphasis. Jesus commands Christians to

love one another, and Galatians 6:10 states, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone.” Because such responses are backed by God’s Word, they should become part of Christian’s lives and actions as believers. Pastors should place emphasis from the pulpit and via other church programming on disaster response as a godly mandate and encourage their congregations toward participation in such responses. When good leaders embrace disaster response as an important aspect of the church’s fabric and outreach, the members will follow suit. Over time, a cultural shift will occur and responding to disasters will become part of the body’s ethos.

If given an example of a disaster and how a church should respond, Mr. Harmon’s thoughts are that first and foremost the church should not limit its concept of a disaster to only the cataclysmic natural occurrences of tsunamis, earthquakes, or Derechos but rather, any major stressor on the community that negatively impacts one’s neighbors and causes them to be in need. As stated earlier, for the average church of three hundred people or less, which is what this project is tailored towards, many of them are not going to see a typhoon or tornado, but they will see factories close, or seasons of drought, flooding, or power outages. These, as well as the larger events, are what the church should be prepared for and are what the world needs to see the true healing and rehabilitation take place which God commands of his people and which merely one or two NGO’s cannot adequately respond.

When it comes to what churches should not do following a disaster response forethought is key. An example of this lack of forethought is what happened following the murder of many Amish children by a crazed gunman in Pennsylvania. Churches across America sent teddy bears and toys by the hundreds and thousands to the families, so much so that it filled up an entire gymnasium. Although well meaning, these gifts were not helpful and ended up being more

burdensome and depressing for the individuals involved. Often it is a matter of using common sense to determine the practicality of responses, actions, and activities. One should never assume to know what others need, especially if a person or church is brand new to disaster responses. The key is to first ask. The church or responder to ask questions to determine what is most needed and most appropriate before impulsively acting and perhaps making the situation worse. Over time, as the church and responders gain experience in responding, they will also gain an understanding of what common and appropriate responses are in different situations.

In responding effectively it has already been noted that a church having appropriate items on hand can be extremely helpful in responding effectively and quickly. In response to the question of what is best to have on hand, Mr. Harmon encourages the churches to do what they can with what they have. That does not mean that they cannot aspire to do more or that they shouldn't purposely work toward the goal of responding to needs on a grander scale, but they should not forget that little is much if God is in it. Churches should never let their limitations discourage them from being involved now, even if in just one or two ways. That being said, if a church has the capacity (through membership, funds, etc.) to pursue stock piling non-perishable supplies or expanding their facility to be a gathering point (e.g. temporary shelter, food kitchen, etc.) for victims of disaster, that would be encouraged. One thing to consider is the likelihood of a disaster occurring in their particular community. For example, if a church's community is prone to flooding or tornadoes, then they should let that help dictate their response planning and the types of materials, facilities, and goods that they should have on hand and plan to offer.

Master Sargent Gerard D. Mascola, Jr. –

Vermont National Guard – Chaplain Assistant

Master Sargent Gerard Mascola, Jr serves as a chaplain assistant with the Vermont National Guard and has been involved in disaster relief efforts for forty years. He has worked with many relief organizations in his career and believes that he is on mission for God in regards to disaster relief.

When asked about what the greatest aspect of relief work is, Master Sargent Mascola shared that he believes the most important thing a church or individual can offer to victims of a disaster is to support them spiritually and to comfort them and offer them hope in the difficult time they are facing. He believes that it is vital that churches understand this and that they know what their role is specifically in disaster responses. This is done by a church having a good idea of what their capacity is, what resources are at their disposal, and how they can best utilize those resources to help effectively those impacted by the disaster. However, when it comes to what he and other disaster planning experts would want churches or pastors to know about disaster relief, it would be for them to have a clear understanding of what their plans are before the disaster strikes. These pre-plans are vital for an effective response which can also deploy rapidly. In order to have a pre-disaster plan in place Christians and churches must find out what their particular community's needs are, and what their vulnerabilities are, and then, based on that, and the type of disaster that has taken place, they will know how to respond effectively to those specific damages or effects.

In the following contexts Master Sargent Gerard Mascola, Jr describes what Christian relief should look like in various scenarios:

Disasters that hurt others (the Nations)

When it comes to preparing for disasters that affect other countries and locations preplanning and prestaging supplies is key. This could be everything from tarps to hygiene kits, to water filtration systems, whatever they are, they need to be stored and ready for deployment at a moment's notice. It goes without saying that as important as it is to have relief items staged, without a clear and well-communicated response plan in place as well, the staged goods are of no use. Once the preplanning has been set and supplies staged, then the disaster will dictate where to go from there.

Disasters in our region

When it comes to disasters in the region, disasters in the county, and disasters in one's backyard, the relief, according to Master Sargent Mascola, Jr, will look fairly the same: staging of materials and having a clear, well-communicated plan. To be more specific about what items a church could theoretically have staged and ready; a church should evaluate the following areas: facilities, relationships, vulnerabilities, and what supplies they already have. As it relates to facilities, this is an area which most churches are already prepared or with very little expense could prepare themselves to help people shower, or to provide places for them to have temporarily shelter. Another area related to facilities would be the purchase and installation of a generator for powering the building during outages. This could be used to help with extreme heat or cold as well. In the area of relationships pastors can think through what relationships he

already has or could establish on behalf of the church ahead of time so that when the disaster occurs there is a network of people who he is ready to call or a relationship already established which has arrangements made for delivery of goods or things like that. Further, in the area of training, there are preparations that can be made as well. As mentioned earlier, there are many free opportunities for a church or for individuals to be trained and prepared for disaster. A good starting point for staging and preparations is for a church to look at their state disaster operational plans and then build on them.

Master Sargent Mascola, Jr., in speaking about what communication should look like between churches before, during, and after a disaster, feels that the church should establish working groups that can aid in communication. He did not go into much detail but felt that if a church established these working groups, the communications could be broken down and be less of a burden for any few people. These groups should be prepared and trained in advance and that way when a disaster-like situation occurs the pastor and church are not left scrambling to communicate and unclear on what to do. Even after a response has ended these groups could be vital for effective follow-up and preparing for the next event.

As it relates to how churches should seek to train their people and what that should look like Master Sargent Mascola, Jr. believes this is an absolute necessity if the churches are to take their rightful place in the mercy ministry to which they are Biblically called. The training should be specifically for when disaster strikes, and it should give them an understanding of exactly what their goal and mission are during a disaster response. Being strategic is vital, and the people should understand what their strategy is, what their mission is, and how to know when they are and are not working their way towards accomplishing that mission in the midst of suffering. The only way this type of training can occur is through repetition and ensuring that the training takes

place ahead of time. Further, effective training should also give the people an opportunity to walk through scenarios that can prepare them to react well under pressure. Mascola has seen this type of training prepare churches for effective service and coordination during disasters, but it relies heavily on the preplanning work. Each church must know in advance what their specific role is and what it is not, in order to accomplish effective collaboration during a disaster.

As it relates to the message of the Bible and the words of Christ during a disaster Mascola believes this has everything to do with being at the right place at the right time. A person must be discerning of when and how to share through word or through deed. If the timing is wrong; meaning, if a person shares the message at an inappropriate time or doesn't share at an appropriate time, if a person does deeds at a time when a word is needed, Mascola contends that it can cause negative effects rather than positive. It is vital that the message of Christ be shown by physical manifestation and not merely in message or word. Related to this, when it comes to the difference between a Christian-based NGO and others, the main difference according to Mascola is that the state and regional assets are the primary difference.

Once a church realizes its mandate, and has a heart for this kind of relief work, the next challenge is to think through how to create and spread a culture of relief work in the whole congregation. This is accomplished on the macro-level through effective planning. Planning events, planning training opportunities, sharing information, and often speaking of this type of heart and work is key to creating this culture. Also, this can be accomplished by allowing the people in the congregation to work through the disaster relief issues along with the leadership. This develops ownership and gets people thinking for themselves.

Some other important points for churches to consider is to approach the leaders of other organizations ahead of time, organizations such as the police, fire department, Salvation Army,

and others. Churches should ask them what the best way to work with and coordinate with them is and then ask their permission to be included in their plans and to use their personnel and facilities in their response to the situation. Starting as locally as possible is a good plan of action for churches. They should focus first on their town, then city, then county, and so on. Another aspect of an effective response is for the church always to consider the different culture they are working with and what their background and beliefs are in formulating the most appropriate and effective response. Churches should have on hand, at least, the resources needed for what they believe they have the capacity to respond to at a minimum. In a response, it is always better to think of the basics that need to be covered and stage for those rather than overshooting and not being able to follow through with those plans. These are some of the basics that a church must think through in order to have an effective response.

Model Using Amherst County, Virginia

The location where this project model will be implemented is in Amherst County, Virginia. Located in central Virginia, Amherst is the home to an estimated 15,500 people as of the year 2015 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Of those 15,500 people, the estimated per capita income is \$24,300.00 a year. This is roughly 25,000 less than the average for the Commonwealth of Virginia.⁵⁹ This is an area where it is not uncommon to find blue-collar workers who are working multiple jobs. Another aspect of Amherst County to consider is that a large portion of the County's population is dependent on well water. This is a factor when electricity is compromised due to fallen trees, lightning, or other types of severe wind or storms.

⁵⁹ <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/statemedian/>

Amherst is also an area where flooding has occurred in the past, along with drought, severe winds, tornados, and other natural disasters. Combined with the low income of this area it makes it susceptible to dehydration (due to the lack of well water which requires electricity), transportation difficulty because of heavily wooded areas, and the ability to rebound from a disaster which causes financial hardship.

The following is this student's suggested plan for creating a disaster relief model for Amherst, VA through the local church:

1. Realize you cannot do it alone

The first step is to recruit help. This may look like a pastor or church leader announcing on a Sunday morning an interest meeting for anyone desiring to serve in this way or to find out more information concerning disaster relief. Get everyone together and elect a leader who will be the point person to disseminate information and aid in collaboration.

2. Collaborate with local government and NGO officials.

Let the local leaders know you are there and what your capacity or desired capacity is. Let them feel your support. Also, find out what resources are available through them, where they are strong, where they need help, pro-active coordination and communication with these agencies is critical to an effective response, not doubling up on efforts, and to keeping relations in a healthy place. These agencies should already know many of the local challenges faced by the Amherst people, what has been the difficulties in the past, and what resources are available.

3. Assess the damage and extent of the effected

This may sound simple and in some ways it is, but a rapid assessment of the damage is vital to an informed and effective response. When this student responded to Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines in 2013 one of the first assessments (and helpful ones) was by standing on top of a decimated vehicle and just overlooking the landscape of the city. Assessment tends to look somewhat different for each response, but the key is to get as quick and accurate a picture of the damage which occurred as possible. It is also during this time that hazards are identified, and what a safe response looks like from that point on. This information can come from surveying it one's self, from television, radio, witnesses, or the like. It is also important for the church response to not neglect the great spiritual needs that will no doubt be prevalent amidst all the physical damage. A good question for the response team to ask is, 'how can we give people hope in this situation?' To aid in this strategic response, a predesignated team should be trained and equipped to respond to these disaster areas to pray for people, listen to them, and help where possible. This is a great position for those who are unable to do the physically strenuous work or who have an evangelistic heart or who are so gifted to have a notable impact in this area.

4. Determine capacity and the most pressing need

Upon assessment, the church's response team then meets to determine the most immediate needs of the community and what capacity the church has to meet those needs or partner with others who can. IMPORTANT NOTE: this step is where many NGO's and churches get stuck. It is important that the response not be planned to perfection while people are

suffering, and potentially even dying. For example, in the Philippines the most immediate need for the people was shelter. Other NGO's were spending days and weeks bringing in sheet metal for roofs and lumber, but by the time their materials had come in Samaritan's Purse had already covered hundreds of people's homes with a thick plastic tarp. Once this most pressing need was being met, Samaritan's Purse moved on to developing hygiene kits and then later more permanent shelters. This example illustrates a core value of disaster response, namely, responding rapidly to many with something basic is better than responding slowly to few with something perfect. The church response team, in the same way, must determine the greatest needs of the Amherst community and how to reach the most people in meeting those needs.

5. Own a plan

Once the team is at this point, a plan should be strategically laid out and approved by the overseeing pastor. Specific action steps, in order or priority, should be laid out, and delegation to team members and church member should commence. It would be helpful for the church to have a designated page on its website or something like that, where all team members know to go for updates and information. It should also be noted that the response team should reassess this plan throughout the days and weeks post-disaster adjust or change the methodology for maximum effectiveness and strategy.

6. Follow up:

This final step is often neglected by NGO's because they are on to the next country and disaster, but not so with the local church and this is her greatest strength. Not only are inroads established, and maximum human impact with mercy and love were shown, but from here the church gets the privilege (and task, because it is work) to continue its love and connection with those who were so impacted by the disaster. The church gets to go deeper into the heart healing and the rebuilding stages of disaster relief. This is a vital step towards health and wholeness. Whatever methods the church uses to gather the affected people's information, (there are several that can work), it is important that as much as possible, those connections are established so that a healthy, ongoing relationship with the victims are possible. Again to illustrate this, while in the Philippines this student was asked again and again when Samaritan's Purse would be leaving. There was clearly an expectation that all of the sudden the help would be gone, and for many of the Filipinos working for SP, their job would be gone too. The fact that SP was out for more than the media coverage and cared to set up a permanent office in the Philippines and to continue working there meant a lot to them. Long after the other NGO's left SP was still rebuilding, installing permanent shelters made with lumber and steel, installing septic systems, and teaching the locals good hygiene practices as well as discipling them in the ways of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Answering the Call: What the Church Must Do

Jesus was a refugee. He fled man-made disaster when he was but a babe. He saw and experienced famine and other natural disasters which we still experience today. He tasted the same “Genesis 3 fallen world” that marks the present. This world, which was “groaning for its deliverance”⁶⁰ during the time of Christ and still groans and writhes, quakes and shakes, looking for its redemption one day when its maker comes to make “all things new”⁶¹. It is for this world that God became man and came to die. It is for this fallen world that Jesus weeps as he did over Jerusalem and desires to heal, and restore, and make new. He has given his followers this same mandate, the “ministry of reconciliation” as one passage in the Bible puts it; to show the same mercy that has been received, to be manifestations of God’s love and grace to the world. The true follower of Christ, the individual (or church) which has been changed from the inside out, cannot deny the life which Christ lived and which he calls all of those to live who belong to Him. This is the call to every true Christian church and every true Christian believer. This truth has been painted from Scripture, and exemplified through movements of the past and of the present.

The results of the church responding biblically in times of need will only be accurately measured by God in Heaven. However, from man’s perspective, the results are undeniable and powerful. It has been said that when people see Jesus for who He really is; not for who men make Him out to be, not for what men can use Him to accomplish, not for what religion and man-centered movements paint Him as, but for who He really is, then they would be drawn to Him. He would be undeniably desirable and incredible, beautiful and the greatest reality in the universe. In the same way, it has also been said

⁶⁰ Romans 8:22.

⁶¹ Revelation 21:5.

that if people could see the Church for what it really is; not for what man has made it out to be, or twisted it into, or conformed it to appear, with all of its abuses and political agendas, but for what it really is, then it is the most attractive, powerful, effectual, greatest movement this side of Heaven. When a Church of truly redeemed people, not perfect, but walking after Christ in humility and power, when that church is actively asking the question, “How can we be Christ to these hurting people?”, then they are on the path towards blessing from God, and there is nothing that can stand in their way.

This student’s personal testimony of such a movement testifies to the fact that the results of such obedience and conformity to Christ in relief work is powerful and great. Whether it be in Amherst County following the dangerous winds of the Derecho storm or the devastating floods that impacted Nashville, TN, the opportunities for impact and fruitfulness abound. The many families that years later still stop this student to thank the church for water that was handed out in Amherst when people’s wells did not work, or to express thanks for food and for helping remove debris from storms, these families were deeply impacted, and several are now a part of the church.

To see tens of thousands of people receive blankets and clean water, hygiene kits, and cooking materials, food, and a warm smile and a loving embrace; to see the effect that has on a country, on a people, the results are no less than culture shaping, life-changing, and powerful beyond measure. The opportunities afforded through this type of relief work to help people in the future are replete. In the Philippines churches have been planted, sawmills started and handed over to locals, ministry teams formed, education teams to go from village to village teaching about disease and basic hygiene have been established, sewage systems, water treatment plants, toilets, and septic tanks now being produced on the largest scale in the Philippines are now established and are producing more than any other on the islands, millions of dollars pouring in to pay locals to replant their gardens and boost the economy, to replant trees and to help the local infrastructure move forward towards health and financial independence, and the examples could go on and on. All of this good, health-infusing work came out of a horrific disaster. The hundreds of poor Filipinos who are now full-time employees testify to the power of consistency in a region and the effect it can have on generations. It’s an awesome and powerful thing; that such beauty and such health could come out of such disaster and

such pain. This is the testimony of the church in hard times. This should be the testimony of every church and every Christian. This should be the reaction quickly following every pain and suffering which impacts the world.

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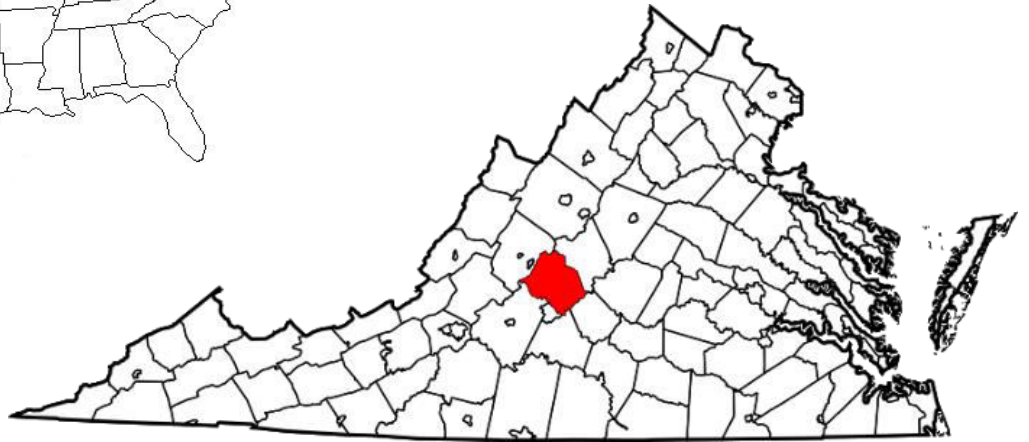
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APPENDIX



The County of
AMHERST, VIRGINIA



Appendix 1

1. American Red Cross (www.redcross.org)
2. Catholic Charities (www.catholiccharitiesusa.org)
3. Christian Disaster Response (www.cdresponse.org)
4. Church of the Brethren – Emergency Response (www.brethren.org/bdm)
5. Church World Service (www.cwsglobal.org)
6. Disaster News Network (www.disasternews.net)
7. Episcopal Relief and Development (www.er-d.org)
8. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Domestic Disaster Response (www.ldr.org)
9. FEMA (<http://training.fema.gov/IS/>)
10. International Critical Incident stress Foundation (www.icisf.org)
11. International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (www.istss.org)
12. National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov)
13. National Organization for Victim Assistance (www.trynova.org)
14. National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (www.nvoad.org)
15. Nazarene Disaster Response (www.nazarenedisasterresonse.org)
16. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (www.pcusa.org/pda)
17. The Salvation Army (www.salvationarmyusa.org)
18. Southern Baptist Convention (www.namb.net/chaplaincy-crisis-intervention/)
19. United Church of Christ (www.uccorg/disaster/technology-disasters/)
20. United Methodist Committee on Relief (www.umcor.org)

21. World Renew (www.worldrenew.org).⁶²

The following professional spiritual care and mental health provider organizations were listed:

1. American Association of Pastoral Counselors (www.aapc.org)
2. American Counseling Association (www.counseling.org)
3. American Psychological Association (www.apa.org)
4. Association of Professional Chaplains (www.professionalchaplains.org)
5. American Psychiatric Association (www.psych.org)
6. International Conference of Police Chaplains (www.icpc4cops.org)
7. National Association of Jewish Chaplains (www.najc.org)
8. National Association of Catholic Chaplains (www.nacc.org)
9. National and the Association of Social Workers (www.naswdc.org)

⁶² *Light Our Way: A Guide for Spiritual Care in Times of Disaster*, pages 56-60.