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SEND TO FRIEND



Lamplight

A Newsletter of the US Disaster Program



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

Issue #11 | November/December, 2011

A Note from Katie

We've just wrapped up In-House week here at Episcopal Relief & Development. This is the week every year when our staff gathers from all over the country and the world to collaborate with colleagues, share fellowship, and give PowerPoint presentations - many, many PowerPoint presentations. In creating one of these presentations about the work of the US Disaster Program this past year, I had the opportunity to step back and look at what we have accomplished.

Despite an extremely active disaster season this year, we've tried to keep a steady focus on disaster preparedness. We held four regional conferences around the country, training disaster coordinators from 36 dioceses. Once trained, these coordinators act as liaisons to the diocese, assisting in planning for and responding to disasters. They increased the Church's ability to further prepare and to respond to disasters. Additionally, we supported local



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News:

Hurricane Irene Response
 Read about the work of our partners in response to flooding across the northeast in [Episcopal Congregations Aid Neighbors in Northeast Flood Response](#)

Preparedness Planning Guide is Now Online
 Use this [Online Guide](#) to walk your

trainings in many of these dioceses, training representatives from more than 170 congregations. Around the country, this work is beginning to gain traction. A year ago, there were six dioceses with active disaster coordinators, including one with a committee. At this point, at least 34 dioceses have an active disaster coordinator and 17 have committees. There is still much work to be done, but I want to make sure we're celebrating our successes. I know that forming a committee or writing a plan doesn't always feel like a big success, but around the country the impact of all this work means that we're in a much better position as a Church to help our neighbors after disasters.

As we enter into this Advent season of reflection and anticipation, I hope you will join me in celebrating the preparedness work that has begun this year, and renew our commitment to continue it in the coming year.

Peace,
Katie

Serving by Asking - Hurricane Irene Response

At around 10 a.m. on the Sunday morning Hurricane Irene made landfall on the East Coast, the Rev. Elizabeth McWhorter, Rector of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Tuxedo Park, NY, heard sirens. St. Mary's is located directly across the highway from the neighborhood known as the "East Village," and McWhorter watched as local firefighters, emergency medical personnel and police officers evacuated East Village residents using rafts and ropes. The dam holding back Echo Lake, just up the river, had broken sending an estimated 100,000 gallons of water cascading into the Ramapo River on whose banks the East Village rests.



St. Mary's in Tuxedo Park, NY

As she watched the evacuation, McWhorter thought about the charge to Christians to love their neighbor as their selves. How could St. Mary's love their neighbors in the recovery process that was to follow? What could they, as a parish, realistically do to help?

congregation through the process of disaster preparedness planning.

Join "Ready to Serve"

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

Volunteer Opportunities:

Diocese of Alabama

[Tornado](#) recovery

Diocese of Tennessee

Home rebuild program in [Nashville](#), please contact Denice O'Neil

Diocese of North Dakota

Flood recovery and home rebuild program in [Minot](#), please contact the Rev. Mary Johnson

Upcoming Trainings:

JANUARY 28, 2012

Preparedness training in the Diocese of Oregon

JANUARY 28, 2012

Preparedness training at the Outreach Summit in the Diocese of Alabama

FEBRUARY 2-4, 2012

Preparedness training at Convention for the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

MARCH 24, 2012

Disaster preparedness and response training in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina

Current Emergency Relief Projects:

[HELP NOW!](#)

Flood Response

Diocese of Vermont

Flood Response

Diocese of Central New York - Binghamton, NY

Flood Response

Diocese of Western Massachusetts - Williamstown, MA

Current Disaster Recovery Projects:

[HELP NOW!](#)

The Episcopal Diocese of

The first thing they did was look at the needs in the community. McWhorter said, "We didn't want to distribute items that we thought were needed, and then go back to our lives, without connecting with our neighbor's actual needs." Soon after residents returned home, volunteers went out to the affected community and asked people what they needed. This information was then used to match family needs with donated items. Later, the people of the East Village were invited to gather at St. Mary's to organize as a community for the long recovery process still ahead. The message that emerged as people told stories about their losses and shared insights with one another was, "We can do this...together."

Read more about St. Mary's flood response in [Success Stories: Serving by Asking | Tuxedo Park, NY](#) in our online [resource library](#).

Use Your Church to House Volunteers

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, donations streamed into New Orleans: money, food, clothes, and volunteers. St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Metairie, LA, housed some of the many volunteer groups that came to help gut and rebuild homes in New Orleans. Many parishioners were unable to help with the physical recovery work, so instead they participated in a ministry of hospitality. The Rev. A.J. Heine, Rector of St. Augustine's, said of the ministry, "There was a lot of joy. It is amazing seeing people of good faith come in energized to help - it re-energized us to do good work too."



Volunteer cots set up in a Sunday school room at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church

For four years the church provided housing for individuals and groups. Volunteers slept in classrooms, the choir room, the parish hall, even the hallways - wherever they could find a spot. At the peak of the relief efforts, they had groups every day of the week. Heine said, "Without the hurricane we might not have been moved to do this, and I am so glad that we did. As I look back, the biggest thing I feel is the joy of how our congregation was transformed by this ministry."

North Dakota

All Saints Episcopal Church in Minot is winterizing flooded homes and building the infrastructure to rebuild come spring.

The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama

Helping to provide long-term rebuilding and recovery assistance for the unmet needs of families affected by tornadoes in Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, Cullman, Sawyerville, Madison County and Dekalb County.

Metropolitan Ministries

Providing a "financial emergency room" to help with the unmet needs of people affected by the April 2011 tornadoes in Chattanooga, TN. They provide pastoral care, referrals and direct assistance.

The Episcopal Community Services of Louisiana (ECSLA)

Supporting oil spill-affected communities as they adapt to the financial, emotional and social changes caused by the oil spill through case management and supporting community resilience.

Jericho Road

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

Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee

St. Luke's Community House is now a Restore the Dream Center site and serves the neighborhood of West Nashville by supporting home reconstruction, providing case management services and "care for the care-giver" trainings.



U.S. Disaster Program

Contact Us:

Add your name to the "Ready to Serve" volunteer and skills roster at volunteer@er-d.org

Katie Mears, Program Manager
kmears@er-d.org

Alison Hare, Preparedness Coordinator
ahare@er-d.org

For more information on how to house volunteer groups at your church, please see [How To: Use Your Church to House Volunteer Groups | Metairie, LA](#) in our online [resource library](#).



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