

Lamplight

A Newsletter of the US Disaster Program



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

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A Note from The Team

Hi, All!

The US Disaster program has been on the road! We escaped two major snowstorms in New York to hold level one disaster preparedness and response trainings for diocesan leaders in Parrish, FL, and Albuquerque, NM. So far, thirty-six people have represented twenty-six dioceses at trainings in 2015! Thank you to the staff at the Diocese of Southwest Florida and the Diocese of the Rio Grande for your gracious hospitality.

It has been so lovely to put faces to the names of people engaging in disaster preparedness ministry across the country. If you would like to see photos from trainings, check out Episcopal Relief & Development's [Facebook photo album](#).

We can't wait for our upcoming trainings in Racine, WI, and Oklahoma City, OK! For more information about these trainings, contact [Lura](#).

In Peace,
Katie, Lura, Dane and Ethan

Ben's Lighthouse Fortifying Newtown's Resilient Community

In June 2013, a 20-foot-tall, green and white lighthouse stood outside of Trinity Episcopal Church, Newtown. The tower served as an invitation for community members to participate in a nautically-themed day of family activities. Hundreds of participants were greeted by an array of music, dancing and art projects. There was even an interactive seascape constructed just in front of the church's chancel, complete with waves, fishing nets, telescopes and more lighthouses.

The Lighthouse Festival was the first event held by Ben's Lighthouse, an organization supported by Trinity Church to honor the memory of Ben Wheeler and other children killed at Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012. The organization's



Join "Ready to Serve":

[Sign up here](#) to offer your services to your vulnerable neighbors after a disaster.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Episcopal Dioceses of Easton, New Jersey, Newark and New York

Find volunteer opportunities and registration information for Hurricane Sandy-impacted areas at relief.episcopalny.org.

Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem

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

Episcopal Relief & Development-supported Projects:

Disaster Response:

Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi

The Diocese of Mississippi is working to assist residents of Columbia, MS affected by December tornados.

inaugural event took place on the 6-month anniversary weekend of the shootings. One supporter said, "We took an otherwise uncomfortable weekend and created thousands of smiles."

In the two years following the tragedy in Newtown, CT, The Episcopal Church in Connecticut and Episcopal Relief & Development have partnered to support Ben's Lighthouse and Trinity Episcopal Church. During that time, Ben's Lighthouse has emerged as a leader in fostering community resilience. Working with the understanding that "helping is healing," Ben's Lighthouse provides opportunities for relationship building, creative expression and service work. Notably, Ben's Lighthouse sponsored a service trip where 20 teens were able to contribute to the rebuilding efforts after floods damaged a community in Loveland, CO. On their trip, participants had the opportunity to connect with survivors of shooting in Littleton, CO. Upon their return, the organization held a discussion forum so that the broader community could listen to the youths' reflections on the trip. Some of the Newtown participants still text with their mentors in Colorado, developing lasting healing relationships.

However, despite an outpouring of initial support, Newtown community members report that there are increasing and unmet needs. Many of the early support agencies are no longer active in the area.

Focused on addressing these challenges, Program Manager Kelly Paredes plans to promote opportunities for engagement that utilize a vast array of local talents. Volunteers and staff are working to support the mission of fostering empathy, self awareness and volunteerism within the community. So far, planned activities for 2015 include the formation of Ben's Lighthouse Club to reflect on community healing, the continuation of a popular mentorship program, a winter family fun festival and additional service projects.

For more information about the work of Ben's Lighthouse, visit their [website](#).

Tips & Lessons: Mobilizing Your Network of Supporters After a Disaster

On April 27, 2014, tornadoes tore through central Arkansas, killing 16 people and causing significant property damage in several communities. Unfortunately, Arkansas is no stranger to severe weather. Because tornados were a likely hazard in their area, the Arkansas Episcopal Disaster Relief Team had met for months to prepare, and were ready to launch their response to the deadly storms.

In collaboration with diocesan leadership, other local responders and Episcopal Relief & Development, Disaster team members were able to assess the impact of the storm and determine where their efforts were most needed. Volunteers from seven churches responded by providing gift

Disaster Recovery:

Episcopal Diocese of Colorado

The Diocese of Colorado is working to help people recover following flooding that swept the state's Front Range in the fall of 2013.

Episcopal Church in Connecticut

The Diocese of Connecticut is supporting Ben's Lighthouse, a ministry of Trinity Episcopal Church in Newtown, which is working to promote the long-term health of the community's children, youth and families and to nurture a culture of non-violence and caring.

Episcopal Diocese of Easton

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

Episcopal Diocese of New York

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

Episcopal Dioceses of New Jersey and Newark

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

Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

The Diocese of Oklahoma is working with congregations and long-term recovery groups around the state to meet the needs of vulnerable people following tornados in the spring of 2013.

Resources for Disaster Preparedness and Response:

Visit Episcopal Relief & Development's online [Resource Library](#) for numerous case studies and best practices in disaster response at the diocesan and congregational level.

cards, offering spiritual support and running drop-in centers where individuals could connect with multiple forms of assistance. Youth groups were set to work removing debris from their communities. Response coordinators connected with bilingual volunteers to make a concerted effort to ensure that undocumented and non-English speakers were able to access services necessary to rebuild. A local church in Conway opened their doors to individuals in need of temporary housing. Now, after extensive relief efforts, the Arkansas Episcopal Disaster Relief Team has shifted its focus to long-term recovery so that it can continue to support the communities impacted by the storm.

The Arkansas Disaster Relief Team was able to initiate such thoughtful and enduring tornado response because it was able to mobilize a large constituency of passionate supporters before and during the disaster.

Read more for tips on mobilizing your own network of supporters after a disaster [here](#).



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