

Lamplight

A Newsletter of the US Disaster Program



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

Issue #22 | Nov 2013

A Note from Katie

Hello everyone,

Our attention can be easily riveted to disasters that receive a lot of media attention, such as Hurricane Sandy or the tornados in Oklahoma this past spring. But often the Church is moved to respond to disasters that never particularly make the national news. One example is last month's South Dakota blizzard, which had a devastating impact on farmers and their neighbors. The relationships local congregations had with their neighbors prepared them to recognize the impact this storm had on the vulnerable in these communities, even when the broader media stopped paying attention.

In this issue of Lamplight you can learn more about how the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota is helping people recover from the blizzard, and you can pick up some valuable disaster preparedness planning tips from the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem, including how to foster ways to listen to vulnerable neighbors.

Meanwhile, please remember to pray for all people in crisis, as well as those responding to them - both in the disasters we've heard of and those we have not.

Peace,
Katie



In this Issue:

Diocese of South Dakota:
Responding to October Blizzard

Diocese of Bethlehem: Fostering
Disaster Preparedness in
Congregations

News:

**Updates on Hurricane Sandy
response a year after the disaster.**
[Read more here.](#)

Join "Ready to Serve":

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

Current Disaster Response Projects:

Blizzard Response
Diocese of South Dakota

Flood Response
Diocese of Colorado

Flood Response
Diocese of Pittsburgh

Diocese Responds To Vulnerable Ranchers After

South Dakota Blizzard

In the wake of a rare, early October blizzard that wiped out a large percentage of South Dakota's cattle industry, the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota has mobilized its congregations to assess and report needs among vulnerable people affected by the storm.

In some parts of western South Dakota, as much as 50 inches of snow fell, driven by 70 mph winds. Estimates indicate 20,000 cattle died in the blizzard.

Diocesan Disaster Coordinator Randy Barnhardt said parishes are reporting that among the hardest hit are young ranchers who have lost substantial portions of their herds and have no insurance with which to recover. Additionally, vulnerable area residents have also been burdened by the cost of tree removal and some are struggling financially after paying for hotel rooms that they rented when electricity went out for more than a week.

The diocese is using an emergency grant from Episcopal Relief & Development to help those hardest hit by the blizzard to recover.

"We depend on the people in the local parishes to know who is affected most and who needs assistance," Barnhardt said.

He said he learned of one young rancher who lost all but one of his cattle. To help such ranchers, the diocese is looking to purchase heifers that would bear calves in the spring.

"If you can buy one heifer you can make a world of difference," he said.

Tips on Preparing Your Parish to Respond Effectively to a Disaster

When the Susquehanna River overflowed in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene in 2011, it displaced thousands of people in West Pittston, PA, and caused millions of dollars in damage. And it stopped a block from Trinity Episcopal Church.

"We did nothing to protect the building," recalled Janine Ungvarsky, the parish's missionary for ministry and renewal. "Had the water come a block farther, our church would have suffered damage that we had done nothing to protect it from."

Volunteer Opportunities:

Dioceses of Easton, New Jersey, New York

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

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.

Current Disaster Recovery Projects:

HELP NOW!

Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem

Trinity Episcopal Church in West Pittston is working with ecumenical partners in Northeast Pennsylvania to support neighbors affected by flooding as a result of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee in September 2011.

Episcopal Diocese of 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.

Jericho Road

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

Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana

Case managers are supporting affected communities as they adapt to the financial, emotional and social changes caused by Hurricane Isaac and the oil spill.

Over the next two years, Trinity spearheaded a response throughout the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem to help its vulnerable neighbors in West Pittston rebuild and recover from the flood. And it added a new tool to its disaster response kit: a parish disaster plan that will help it do an even better job of protecting itself and responding to others should a crisis strike again.

Trinity's experience is informing other congregations in the Diocese of Bethlehem as well. Last year the diocese passed a resolution that all congregations develop disaster plans within the year. So far Ungvarsky and Trinity's rector, the Rev. John Major, have trained about half the parishes in the diocese in creating disaster preparedness plans.

They offer the following suggestions for planning on the congregational level.

Use a planning guide

Episcopal Relief & Development offers a [Comprehensive Preparedness Planning Guide for Congregations and Parishes](#) and a facilitator's guide to lead a congregational committee through the planning process. It also offers abbreviated Silver and Bronze versions of the planning guide. All are free and downloadable from the agency's resource library, www.episcopalrelief.org/resourcelibrary.

Create a disaster leadership team

A small team of three to seven people in a family-sized parish can fill out all the information in Episcopal Relief & Development's Preparedness Planning Guide for Congregations and Parishes in four to six weekly meetings. After that, the team should meet every six to twelve months to review and update the plan as needed.

Update your parish contact list

Providing a few key people with an updated parish contact list in both paper and electronic versions will make it easier to reach vulnerable parishioners quickly. It will also allow you to share news and rally volunteers even if you can't get into your church. Because home phone numbers don't help when people are evacuated, the parish list should include cell phone or other alternate numbers as well as email addresses.

Identify congregation and diocesan communication resources

In the planning process, make sure to anticipate how the communication resources that your parish already has access to can help you tell your story and share news in a disaster. We are fortunate enough to have

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 Diocese of New Jersey

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

New Resources for Disaster Preparedness and Response:

[Preparedness Planning Guide for Diocesan Offices](#). **How to create a disaster plan to protect diocesan staff, records and assets.**

Download more resources for preparedness and response from Episcopal Relief & Development's Resource Library.



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access to a diocesan-wide email list and blog, in addition to a web site and social media presence. The print and electronic newsletters that were already in use at Trinity before the flood provided an easy means to keep parishioners informed of what was going on and how they could help.

Listen to your neighbors

In the planning process, consider the assets your congregation can use to gather people, learn about their gifts and their needs, and connect them to resources. After the flood, Trinity found it was important to be present to our neighbors to listen and identify unmet needs, such as providing a way to clean treasured belongings. More than two years later, we are still listening and providing volunteer help. At a recent barbecue to mark the second anniversary of the flood, we learned of some flood-related needs in the neighborhood that we were still unaware of.

We have learned that disaster response isn't about being there first but about being there for as long as it takes.

An [unabridged, printable copy of this article](#), can be found at episcopalrelief.org/resourcelibrary.