



# Episcopal Relief & Development

Healing a hurting world



## Ready to Serve With Compassion

A GUIDE TO PREPARING VOLUNTEERS TO RESPOND TO A DISASTER IN A SPIRIT  
OF COMPASSION, SOLIDARITY AND MUTUALITY



## Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the following, who reviewed drafts of this resource:

- Mary Johnson
- Keith Adams
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## Introduction

Maybe you heard about the disaster on the news or saw it in the paper. Perhaps it was near your own community, or you know someone who lives there. It tugged at you, and you wanted to help. So you've gathered a group, and you are getting ready to volunteer.

Thank you.

Volunteers are critical to disaster recovery, especially in the lives of those who do not have the resources to rebuild on their own. Volunteers often enter the scene when those who have been hit by a disaster are at their lowest point. They help to get crucial work done, so people can get back in their homes and on with their lives.

While you'll get a more thorough introduction to the work you'll be doing and the people you'll be serving when you arrive at your destination, there are several things you can do to get ready. In addition to packing the right gear and getting all the paperwork in, spending some time reflecting on how to bring compassion, kindness, sensitivity and empathy to the work at hand is an essential part of preparation.

That's because disasters are times of vulnerability. Asking for help is difficult. People's self-worth and dignity can be quite fragile. The way that we enter homes, interact with residents and go about our work can build people up and bring them hope. But it can also tear people down and bring shame. It all depends on the attitudes and expectations that we bring with us.

Episcopal Relief & Development is pleased to provide this resource to help your group prepare to bring the love, sensitivity and compassion of our Christian tradition to the work of disaster recovery. Our US Disaster Preparedness and Response program inspires, connects and equips Episcopal leaders and church partners to prepare for hazards in their communities, mitigate the impact of disasters and help the vulnerable make a full and sustained recovery.

We hope these resources are helpful to you. Please contact us to share how you used them and how the experience went. Send comments and questions to Lura Steele at [lstele@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:lstele@episcopalrelief.org).

## About this Resource

The core activities and support exercises in **Ready to Serve with Compassion** are designed to help participants relate to the people they serve with compassion and sensitivity. Discussions explore the concepts of vulnerability and empathy as they relate to service. Dramatic sketches invite volunteers to understand how an experience of receiving service or interacting with outside volunteers might feel to a community member. Exercises strengthen listening skills and examine the power dynamics of giving and receiving.



Volunteers are critical to disaster recovery, especially in the lives of those who do not have the resources to rebuild on their own. Volunteers often enter the scene when those who have been hit by a disaster are at their lowest point. They help to get crucial work done, so people can get back in their homes and on with their lives.

The activities in **Ready to Serve with Compassion** can be adapted to fit your unique schedule. We recommend that you start by including the two core activities, “The Power of Vulnerability” and “The Disaster Dialogues” in your preparation meetings, and using other exercises as your schedule allows.

## CORE ACTIVITIES

**The Power of Vulnerability** (60-90 minutes) features a video and discussion of social work researcher Brené Brown’s TED Talk of the same name. The experience explores people’s discomfort with vulnerability and illustrates how respecting and welcoming vulnerability is essential to fostering resilience. Themes from this powerful discussion can be developed throughout your preparation and volunteer experience, and beyond.

**The Disaster Dialogues** (30-90 minutes) employ 3-minute dramatic sketches and follow-up discussions to invite participants to consider the perspectives of people on the receiving end of volunteer work, and to explore areas where volunteers must be particularly sensitive. There are five sketches in all, with accompanying notes for leading discussion. Each sketch and discussion takes 20- 30 minutes. Discuss several in one session or use them individually over several meetings.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES

If your group already meets regularly or will meet for several sessions to prepare for the volunteer experience, consider including one or more of these additional activities. Most are up to 20 minutes long, so they can be inserted into a 60-minute meeting and still leave time to cover other things.

**1. An Introduction: The Intersection of Giving and Receiving** (20 minutes) – Use this discussion as introduction for either Core Activity. The conversation challenges participants to explore their own comfort level with giving and receiving and how that effects the relationships involved in responding to a disaster.

**2. One Body, Many Parts: A Prayerful Beginning** (20 minutes) – This combination of Scripture, creative discussion and group prayer makes a meaningful prayer experience to open your first session on volunteering.

**3. The Road to Recovery: Where Do We Come In?** (10 minutes) – Use these handouts and facilitator’s talking points to help your volunteers understand where their work falls in the long “Road to Recovery” after a disaster. This can be woven into the information you will be providing on their particular experience.

**4. Ears to Hear: An Exercise in Listening** (20 minutes) – Being with people who are in crisis takes some special listening skills. This exercise challenges participants to listen to someone without inserting their own story or experience.



## Core Activity I: The Power of Vulnerability

**TIME: 60 MINUTES**

**OBJECTIVE** To generate practical tips and guidelines for fostering resilience and dignity both in the vulnerable people that the volunteers are working with and in each other during the trip.

### MATERIALS

- **TED Talk “The Power of Vulnerability” by Brené Brown found at [www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_on\\_vulnerability.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html)** This free video can be downloaded and used under the Creative Commons provisions found on the website. The site also gives directions for downloading the talk to DVD at a cost of about \$10 (see <http://dvd.ted.com/>).
- **Copies of the TED talk transcript (can be viewed and copied from the TED Talk site)** Under the Creative Commons license you can copy and distribute the text as part of this lesson. Make one copy for each participant.
- **Laptop and LCD projector for viewing the video** You can also use a DVD player if you download the talk to DVD.
- **Flip chart, markers and tape for posting**
- **Pens**

### TIPS FOR PREPARING AHEAD OF TIME

- Download the video ahead of time. Do a trial run to make sure it works. (You may need additional speakers to ensure the volume accommodates a large group.) Have the video on the computer screen and ready to run
- It's highly recommended that before doing the Core Activities, the group do the introductory exercise, *The Intersection of Giving and Receiving* (page 27). For either Core Exercise, prominently post the “Giving” an “Receiving” flip chart pages from *The Intersection of Giving and Receiving* discussion.

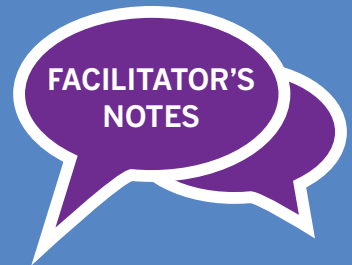
### INTRODUCE AND SHOW THE VIDEO

Use these or your own words to make the following points:

*Brené Brown is a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. She's also a member of Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral in Houston. Her work revolves around the study of vulnerability, courage, authenticity, and shame. She would completely understand the perspectives on giving and receiving that we shared in our previous discussion.*

*And she has some ideas that may help us understand how to address the challenge of “receiving” and to make sure it fosters dignity and resilience. Dr. Brown has written several books, and has created two TED Talks. We're going to view to her talk, “The Power of Vulnerability”.*

*You'll also get a transcript of the talk to write on, and to use to highlight comments that you find important.*



For those impacted by a disaster, recovery can be marked by extended periods of vulnerability. The way volunteers enter this place of vulnerability in the lives of another can strengthen people's path to resilience and recovery. But done without empathy the encounter can also be a source of shame for those we are trying to serve.

Social Work researcher Brené Brown, who is a member of Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral in Houston, has spent more than a decade exploring the qualities that lead vulnerable people to embrace lives of self-worth and connectedness, despite the challenges that they may face. She calls these people the “wholehearted” and has concluded that the key to their resilience is their willingness to embrace vulnerable situations with courage, compassion and self-awareness.

In this session, participants will consider Brown's ideas on vulnerability and will reflect on how as volunteers, they can foster dignity and resilience in their encounters with the vulnerable people they serve.

**Please Note: This video contains some adult themes and some moderately strong language. It is best for college-age and adult audiences. Preview it before showing it to youth.**



- Handout transcripts and show the TED Talk by Brené Brown
- Afterward: Ask the group to briefly share ideas that jumped out at them or questions they had.

## DISCUSSION

Facilitator: Use these or your own words to make the following points:

*Brené Brown insists that vulnerability is a positive thing, that it's necessary for developing resilience and self-worth. And she also points out that most people are pretty uncomfortable with vulnerability, as we discovered ourselves in our own discussion about giving and receiving.*

*Her research has shown that being willing to embrace vulnerability is necessary for resilience, and for being "whole-hearted." **How does this apply to the work we'll be doing as volunteers?***

*Brown said that people who go from vulnerability to wholeheartedness have several characteristics. **What are they?***

**Flip-chart the group's ideas. (Answers from the video to the right)**

**Make the following points:**

- Point out any of these ideas that can also be found on the "Receiving" flip chart page from the **Intersection of Giving and Receiving** exercise. What does this say about the power of receiving? Which of these do we find most challenging?
- When you imagine the work we'll be doing on our trip, how might you encounter these qualities among the people whom we've come to serve and among ourselves?
- What are some practical guidelines that we can keep in mind to make sure that our giving and receiving fosters resilience and dignity in others? Write these on the final flip chart sheet, **"Ways to Uphold Self-worth."**

Note: Both of the core exercises end with a brainstorming of group guidelines. Make sure to transcribe these into a final set of guidelines that volunteers can use on their trip.

## CONCLUSION

- Invite group members to share any insights or challenges they are taking away from the experience.
- Conclude with the closing prayer to the right. For a group prayer, make copies, divide the group in two and read the lines alternately.

## Characteristics of the Wholehearted

- The compassion to be kind to themselves ... "because we can't practice compassion with other people if we can't treat ourselves kindly."
- The willingness to let go of who they thought they should be in order to be who they are. She calls this "Connection."
- The willingness to be seen as vulnerable
- The ability to love without guarantee
- The practice of gratitude

## Closing Prayer

*Merciful God, You yourself knew vulnerability.*

*You knew the frailty of a newborn.*

*You knew poverty.*

*You knew displacement and homelessness.*

*You knew the generosity of others.*

*You fell and were lifted.*

*You suffered and were comforted.*

*You died, and you were raised from the dead.*

*And in your resurrection you still rely on us:*

*To be your hands and feet,*

*To bear your word,*

*To bring your love to a hurting world.*

*Help us to be vulnerable,*

*And to be courageous,*

*And to be wholehearted, as you are.*

*We pray in Jesus' name,*

*Amen.*

## Core Activity II: Disaster Dialogues

**TIME** 20-30 MINUTES FOR EACH DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSION

### OBJECTIVE

Increase sensitivity and compassion by exploring how interacting with outside volunteers might feel to a community member.

### MATERIALS

- Copies of the dialogues for everyone
- Paper for optional journaling activity
- Pens
- Flip chart and markers

### TIPS FOR PREPARING AHEAD OF TIME

It's highly recommended that before doing the Core Activities, the group do the introductory exercise, *The Intersection of Giving and Receiving* (page 27). For either Core Exercise, prominently post the "Giving" and "Receiving" flip chart pages from *The Intersection of Giving and Receiving* discussion.

### INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE

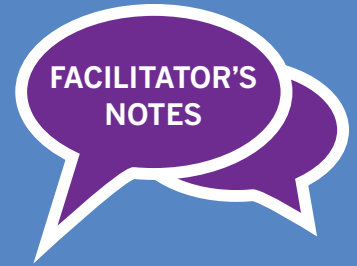
Explain the exercise using these or your own words:

*Empathy is an important skill to have when working with vulnerable people. That means understanding things from their perspective. In this session we're going to listen to some of those perspectives using dramatic sketches that illustrate different kinds of volunteer scenarios.*

- Distribute copies of the dialogues to all.
- Ask for volunteer readers. Point out that they are to stay in character after the reading is done to answer questions from the perspective of their role.

### SHARE THE DIALOGUE

- Read the introduction at the top of the dialogue (if you are doing several dialogues you only need to read it once).
- Introduce the name and setting of the dialogue.
- Ask the characters to introduce themselves using the descriptions provided.
- Continue with the dialogue.



In this exercise group members read a dialogue aloud to the group, taking on the perspective of the characters that they are portraying. The facilitator and the large group then interview the characters on how they felt, what they could have done differently, what surprised them, etc. There are five dialogues in all. You do not need to use all of them.

The exercise does not require practice or stage direction. Simply ask for volunteers to read the parts as you go. They and the audience should listen to what transpires with empathy for the various characters. Then provide about 10 minutes for the characters to comment and the group to ask questions and discuss what transpired. Notes for the facilitator and additional questions to ask are provided with each dialogue.

If you have a very large group (20 or more) you can divide the participants into four small groups to read and discuss the dialogues. Include the large-group discussion as well.



## TALK TO THE CHARACTERS

- Invite the audience members to talk to the characters, asking their own questions about how they felt.
- Use the facilitator's note at the end of each sketch to frame additional questions for the characters
- Invite audience members to share their own perspective.

## CREATE GUIDELINES

After each dialogue, ask the group to brainstorm practical guidelines that uphold the dignity of the people they will be working with on their trip. Flip-chart the ideas.

Note: Both of the core exercises end with a brainstorming of group guidelines. Make sure to transcribe these into a final set of guidelines that volunteers can use on their trip.

## OPTIONAL JOURNALING ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

Provide paper and pens for this exercise. Write the questions on a piece of flip chart paper. Use the following words or your own to introduce the exercise.

*These dialogues invited us to explore what makes for sensitive and compassionate interactions between volunteers and people from the community they are serving in. But as we discovered, there is not a formula for this. It's worth taking some time to sit with our own feelings on what we've just seen and heard.*

- What did you come across that you had not before considered?
- What was true in these fictional pieces?
- Is there anything that challenged you or made you uncomfortable?

## CLOSING

The facilitator can offer the prayer to the right, or invite group members to take turns reading lines.



## Closing Prayer

Incarnate God,

You deeply empathize with us.

You listen closely to our lives and love us right where we are.

You know us at our best and at our most broken.

You are our greatest friend,

Even when we are our own worst enemies.

Help us to love humanity as much as you do.

Help us to be sensitive to those whose pain we cannot fix or fully understand.

We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

## Gum, Half Off

*Overview: Three months have passed since massive storms caused flooding throughout the Tri-County region in early March. The community of Smallville, which lies along the river that flooded, was especially hard hit. Homes were severely damaged. Volunteers are now arriving in the community to help residents who can't afford contractors to hang sheet rock, re-tile floors, clean up yards and repaint the insides and outsides of homes. The local Episcopal Church, St. Andrew's, has transformed the former rectory on the property into housing for volunteers who are helping to repair homes in the area. St. Andrew's program is one small part of a very large disaster response, in which volunteers are traveling from all over the country to help the damaged area rebuild.*

### Characters

**Bill Smith:** I own the local Buy Rite grocery store. After the storm, I lost a lot of money in ruined inventory, then couldn't afford payroll when business didn't pick up after I reopened. I laid off most of the staff, and have been operating the store with my wife and a few family members who are working for free.

**Ann Murphy:** I was the former manager of the Buy Rite, where I had worked for 10 years. I've been laid off for the past month. My husband is a self-employed photographer who lost most of his business after the storm. He has just taken a temporary job cutting down trees and removing debris.

**Rachel Adams and Terry Miller:** We are college-age volunteers from Ohio who are staying at nearby St. Andrew's while we repair houses. We have been part of Habitat for Humanity, but have never been in a community that was hit by a disaster.

**Setting:** *The local Buy Rite grocery store, which is owned by Bill Smith.*

**Bill:** Hey Ann. How are you doing?

**Ann:** Oh we're holding up OK. We have some volunteers coming over to help Jack clean up the property this week. He also got some temporary work with a tree cutting service, so one of us is employed for now.

**Bill:** You know I still feel sick about letting you and the others go. I'd hoped business would pick up when all the government folks and the volunteers started coming. But it's still pretty dead. You were the best manager I ever had.

**Ann:** I was the only manager you ever had, Bill. So you won't be hiring for a while?

**Bill:** I'm not even sure I'm going to be able to hold on to the store, Ann. But you know that as soon as business picks up, you'll be the first person I call. Hey what do you have there? Two gallons of milk? Look, those are nearly expired. Just take them. I'd be pitching them soon anyway.

**Ann:** All right Bill, if it's going to go bad anyway. The kids drink it faster than I can bring it home. Hey look I've got nothing to do right now. Your produce aisle is a mess. I'm going to straighten it up for you.

**Volunteers enter.**

**Rachel:** How much does the gum cost? I don't see a price on it.

**Bill:** It's on sale, two packs for \$1.70.

**Rachel:** Wow, that's cheaper than at home! I'll take two then.

**Bill:** Where's home?

**Terry:** We're from Ohio. A group from our church is staying over at St. Andrews and volunteering in the area. We're repairing houses and doing yard work. I just learned how to set tile.

**Bill:** Well we sure appreciate the help. That's hard work. Are they feeding you enough over there at St. Andrew's?

**Rachel:** Oh yeah. In fact we brought all our food with us. And we even have a couple from our parish who volunteered to cook for us. This is the first time we've even gone into a store all week.

**Bill:** Is that so? Well you tell your cooks that if they need anything to just give a call over here and we'll deliver it. We've got a lot of fresh produce that's going to go bad if someone doesn't buy it soon.

**Terry:** OK. Thanks. But we probably won't need that. We brought so much with us that we'll probably leave what's left for the next group.

**Bill:** Is that so?

**Terry:** Yeah. Well thanks. I hope everything works out for you.

**Bill:** So do we. So do we.

## Gum, Half Off: Notes for Facilitator

As the dialogue unfolds, keep in mind that it highlights the impact that visiting volunteers can have on the local economy. At the end of the discussion, brainstorm some ways that you can support the community you'll be working in.

### BEGIN WITH THESE QUESTIONS:

- From the perspective of the character you played, what were your predominant feelings during this scenario?
- Volunteers: what lessons did this scenario teach about being with someone recovering from a disaster?
- Community members: what advice would you give to the volunteers to make their interactions more sensitive or compassionate?

### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE CHARACTERS:

#### For Ann and Bill

- How do you feel toward the presence of volunteers and long-term responders in your community?
- What is your emotional level in general right now?
- What would give you hope?

#### For Rachel and Terry

- What suggestions would you make to the trip organizers about using resources in the local community during the rest of the week?
- What suggestions would you make for people going on future disaster response trips?

## Mrs. Antonucci's Famous Lasagna

*Overview: Three months have passed since massive storms caused flooding throughout the Tri-County region in early March. The community of Smallville, which lies along the river that flooded, was especially hard hit. Homes were severely damaged. Volunteers are now arriving in the community to help residents who can't afford contractors to hang sheet rock, re-tile floors, clean up yards and repaint the insides and outsides of homes. The local Episcopal Church, St. Andrew's, has transformed the former rectory on the property into housing for volunteers who are helping to repair homes in the area. St. Andrew's program is one small part of a very large disaster response, in which volunteers are traveling from all over the country to help the damaged area rebuild.*

### Characters

**Jenny Lewis and Ben Andrews:** We are volunteers from St. Andrew's. We are also college students who run the Sustainable Living group at our university. Our crew is painting the outside of Mrs. Antonucci's wood-sided home.

**Rita Antonucci:** Since my husband died 10 years ago, I have lived alone in my house on a fixed income. I have eight children and 16 grandchildren, all of whom live in other parts of the country. I pride myself in my Italian cooking, my ability to cook for a crowd and my hospitality.

**Jenny:** Hey, Mrs. Antonucci? It's noon and our group is going to break now. We brought our lunches. We'll be in the yard if you need us.

**Mrs. Antonucci:** Eat in the yard? No, you all come in here and eat in the dining room. I made lunch for you. It's my famous lasagna.

**Ben:** Oh Mrs. Antonucci, we couldn't. We packed our own lunches so you wouldn't have to go to any trouble.

**Mrs. Antonucci:** It's no trouble. You've been working so hard painting the house. I want you to have something special. My gift. Plus it's done and it's getting cold. I used to make this for my kids. I had eight of them. So I know how to cook for a crowd.

**Jenny:** Is there meat in the lasagna?

**Mrs. Antonucci:** (*proudly*) Yes three kinds. There's Italian sausage, and some meatballs I had left over and some ground chuck. Plus three cheeses. And homemade sauce.

**Jenny:** Well here's the thing: There are only four of us, and Ben and I are vegetarians.

**Mrs. Antonucci:** That's OK. There's vegetables in the lasagna too.

**Ben:** No, what Jenny means is that we don't eat meat at all, or dairy or eggs. It's a matter of principle for us. We feel it's unethical to harm animals in any way.

**Mrs. Antonucci:** You don't eat meat? You're like my granddaughter, she's one of those animal lovers too. And you know what? Her dad is a butcher! I'll make you some macaroni and cheese. Wouldn't that be nice? What about the other two who came with you?

**Jenny:** Unfortunately, one of them is allergic to wheat and the other doesn't eat dairy. So I think we'll just eat the lunch we packed.

**Mrs. Antonucci:** You don't want lasagna? You're just going to eat your bagged lunch in the yard? OK. I think you're crazy, but OK. Can I at least bring you out some cake?

**Ben:** That's OK Mrs. Antonucci, really. We don't want you to go to any trouble. I'm sure with such a big family you'll have plenty of people who will eat the lasagna.

**Mrs. Antonucci:** They don't live around here. They all moved away. I eat by myself usually. Well I guess I can freeze it. You tell me if you change your mind about the cake.



## Mrs. Antonucci's Famous Lasagna: Notes for Facilitator

As the dialogue unfolds, keep in mind that this dialogue illustrates the importance of acknowledging and appreciating the gifts of the people who are served. They may want to say thank you in some way. But this scenario doesn't provide easy answers, and may lead to some lively discussion. Participants may have strong views about food ethics, and they mustn't sacrifice their health to be nice. The underlying question is: how can we receive graciously?

### BEGIN WITH THESE QUESTIONS:

- From the perspective of the character you played, what were your predominant feelings during this scenario?
- Volunteers: what lessons did this scenario teach about being with someone recovering from a disaster?
- Community members: what advice would you give to the volunteers to make their interactions more sensitive or compassionate?

### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE CHARACTERS:

**For Mrs. Antonucci:** Even though the volunteers couldn't eat what you prepared, what would have made you feel like they had received your thanks?

#### For Jenny and Ben

- You feel strongly about animal ethics. What would you have done if the person you were helping had strong feelings in the other direction?
- What are other ways you could have showed your appreciation for Mrs. Antonucci's efforts to thank you?

## Enough is Too Much

*Overview: Three months have passed since massive storms caused flooding throughout the Tri-County region in early March. The community of Smallville, which lies along the river that flooded, was especially hard hit. Homes were severely damaged. Volunteers are now arriving in the community to help residents who can't afford contractors to hang sheet rock, re-tile floors, clean up yards and repaint the insides and outsides of homes. The local Episcopal Church, St. Andrew's, has transformed the former rectory on the property into housing for volunteers who are helping to repair homes in the area. St. Andrew's program is one small part of a very large disaster response, in which volunteers are traveling from all over the country to help the damaged area rebuild.*

### Characters

**The Rev. Lisa Jones:** I am the rector of St. Andrew's church, which will be housing the volunteers. So far Jerry, the senior warden, and myself have coordinated the housing of the volunteers in the former rectory. Another parishioner runs the actual response.

**Jerry Evans:** I am the parish's Senior Warden. I am also a retired lawyer and have been a member of the parish for 30 years.

**Lou Rodriguez:** I'm a retired army officer and one of the leaders of the volunteer response group from St. Matthew's in Ohio.

**Nancy Smart:** I'm a school teacher from St. Matthew's who coordinated "Big Hearts for Smallville," the collection efforts to fill the tractor-trailer with items to give to storm victims.

### Setting: *The parish office at St. Andrew's Church*

**Jerry:** Hey Lisa, I just got a call from the new volunteers. They're pulling in now. They've got three vans.

**Lisa:** Great. I've told the Bible study members to park on the street this week, so there should be enough space.

**Jerry:** They just had one question about parking.

**Lisa:** What's that?

**Jerry:** Where can they put the tractor-trailer?

**Lisa:** The WHAT!

**Jerry:** That's what I said. They've brought a tractor-trailer full of stuff with them. They said it's filled with things for the people that they'll be helping.

**Lisa:** Like what items? They'll be painting houses. What did they fill that thing with?

**Jerry:** They didn't say. They wanted it to be a surprise. So look surprised.

**Lisa:** Don't worry. I will.

**Volunteers enter**

**Nancy:** Hello! We're the group from St. Matthew's in Ohio. I'm Nancy and this is Lou.

**Lisa:** Welcome to St. Andrew's. We're so glad you could come and help us out! This is Jerry, our Senior Warden, he will give your group an overview of what to expect in your time here. I understand that you brought a tractor-trailer with you, Nancy!

**Nancy:** Yes, and it is filled with blessings! Ever since we heard about the tragedy here we've been collecting items for the people of Smallville.

**Lisa:** Wow, so you started collecting things three months ago?

**Lou:** One of our parishioners has a cousin who lives here, and she told us of the need people had after the flood. A local car dealer donated some storage space, and a parishioner who has a trucking company donated the use of the tractor-trailer.

**Nancy:** We filled it up! Surprise!

**Lisa:** Oh we're surprised.

**Lou:** Once our volunteers drop off their stuff, they can get started unloading the trailer. Do you have some empty classrooms where we can store the bears?

**Jerry:** Bears?

**Nancy:** Yes. We collected 500 stuffed teddy bears to give to the children of Smallville when we go to work on their houses.

**Jerry:** Well the truth is, we have a pretty small church building. We don't have classrooms – just the parish hall, which we use for everything from church school to coffee hour. The rectory space is all dedicated to the volunteer housing.

**Lisa:** And the houses you'll be working on belong mainly to senior citizens and single people. There aren't that many children in them.

**Nancy:** Well, teddy bears don't spoil. We can just load them into a corner of the parish hall here for now, if that's OK. That way we can get to the blankets and coats. We were all so moved by the pictures of the people all huddled in the rain watching their possessions floating down river when the dam burst, that the blankets just came flooding in – so to speak.

**Lisa:** That is so generous of you.... It's just that the flood was in March, when it was indeed cold and wet. But now it's June. Folks only needed blankets and coats for the first three days. And the Red Cross provided them. They're really not in demand right now.

**Nancy:** Well, maybe the Red Cross will take them. I'll make a few calls. Because once we get the blankets out of the way, we can get to the furniture.

**Jerry:** Furniture?

**Nancy:** Yes, you can't furnish a house without furniture. So we have couches, and kitchenettes and beds.

**Lou:** A parishioner was liquidating his furniture supply business and generously gave us his extra inventory. He's taking a nice tax write off and we can outfit everyone in Smallville with brand new bedroom sets.

**Nancy:** And we figured what people don't take, your parish can sell at your annual flea market. As a fundraiser!

**Lisa:** We don't have a flea market, actually. Or parking or storage. So before you unload the tractor-trailer, let me make a call.

**Nancy:** Who are you calling?

**Lisa:** The Bishop. She's got a bigger parking lot.

## Enough is Too Much: Notes for Facilitator

As the dialogue unfolds, keep in mind that very often people want to respond to a disaster by sending items that they have donated or purchased. It feels much more personal than just sending a check. This scenario illustrates the consequences when the donation does not match the needs of the community or its capacity to store or use them. Very often these situations cause more problems than they solve.

### BEGIN WITH THESE QUESTIONS:

- From the perspective of the character you played, what were your predominant feelings during this scenario?
- Volunteers: what lessons did this scenario teach about being with someone recovering from a disaster?
- Community members: what advice would you give to the volunteers to make their interactions more sensitive or compassionate?

### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE CHARACTERS:

#### For Nancy and Lou

- What were you feeling as you anticipated bringing these items to the people of Smallville?
- How did it feel to be told that the items you brought weren't needed?
- Could the situation have been avoided?

#### For Lisa and Jerry

- You obviously didn't need the items the group brought. What could you have really used?
- What do you do when well-intended but unwanted gifts come your way?
- How does the way you respond to the gift affect your relationship with the volunteers? Is there any risk in rejecting these items?

## Where's the Twine?

*Overview: Three months have passed since massive storms caused flooding throughout the Tri-County region in early March. The community of Smallville, which lies along the river that flooded, was especially hard hit. Homes were severely damaged. Volunteers are now arriving in the community to help residents who can't afford contractors to hang sheet rock, re-tile floors, clean up yards and repaint the insides and outsides of homes. The local Episcopal Church, St. Andrew's, has transformed the former rectory on the property into housing for volunteers who are helping to repair homes in the area. St. Andrew's program is one small part of a very large disaster response, in which volunteers are traveling from all over the country to help the damaged area rebuild.*

### Characters:

**Lottie Williams:** I am a senior citizen. The effects of diabetes make it difficult for me to get around. I live in a trailer on a heavily wooded lot, which has been filled with debris since the storm. Volunteers are clearing the branches from my yard.

**Tyler Williams:** I am Lottie's 15-year-old grandson. I live with my mom, but spend a lot of time hanging out at my grandma's, where I like to skateboard down her long driveway. I'm especially proud of the ramps and jumps I've rigged up.

**Mary Andrews:** I am a volunteer from Ohio and the self-proclaimed "mom" of the group. I'm also a nurse who works part-time. My kids are grown. Ed is my husband.

**Ed Andrews:** I'm also a volunteer. Mary is my wife. I'm a high school P.E. teacher and football coach.

### Setting: Lottie's house

**Mary:** *(calling out)* Hellooo! Mrs. Williams, are you around?

**Lottie:** I'm back here in the TV room.

**Mary:** Oh, there you are. The guys were wondering if you have any twine to tie up the branches.

**Lottie:** I probably have some in one of the kitchen drawers or in the garage. Is Tyler around? Ask him to find you some.

**Mary:** Is Tyler that boy skateboarding on the driveway?

**Lottie:** Yea that's him. He's my grandson. Ask him where the twine is.

**Mary:** All right I'll do that. Actually, the crew is taking a break right now, so I thought I'd come in and get acquainted with you for a bit. How are you doing in all this heat?

**Lottie:** I'm OK. I have a window fan. My soap opera will be back on after this commercial so I can't talk long.



**Mary:** I never could get into watching soaps. I wasn't home enough to get hooked on them. While I'm here, is there anything I can do for you? Can I clean up some of these empty soda cans and candy wrappers on the end tables?

**Lottie:** No that's OK, you can leave them. My daughter will be coming over later. She cleans up for me. I don't get around so well because of my diabetes.

**Mary:** Did you drink all these sodas, Mrs. Williams? I'm a nurse, and I see a lot of diabetics in the hospital. Has your doctor told you how bad these things are for you?

**Lottie:** It's Diet. My daughter says I can have that because there's no sugar.

**Mary:** Even diet soda is bad for a diabetic. It makes you crave more food. Water would be better. So how have you been feeling since the disaster? Were you here in this trailer during the storm?

**Lottie:** I sat in the bathtub with my cat during the worst of it. But God is good. I'm still here, that's all that matters. I don't like to go into it.

**Mary:** You know, they say that keeping things bottled up can be bad for your mental health. Your story is important. You can tell me about it. I'm a good listener.

**Lottie:** I think I hear Tyler in the driveway. I'll go tell him to find you that twine.

**Mary:** No that's OK. I'll tell him. The group is probably done with their break. I'll stop by later to check on you.

-----

**Ed:** Are you Tyler?

**Tyler:** Yep.

**Ed:** Your grandma says you might know where the twine is. We need some to tie up the branches from the yard.

**Tyler:** Twine? I don't know. There might be some in the garage. I can look in a minute.

**Ed:** So did you build these skateboard jumps?

**Tyler:** Yea. I set up the course myself. Grandma lets me use her driveway. We don't have any room at my mom's.

**Ed:** Skateboarding is good exercise. Are you at the high school?

**Tyler:** I'm a sophomore.

**Ed:** Do you play sports?

**Tyler:** Nope. I just ride my skateboard with my friends.

**Ed:** I played high school football. I'm a coach now. Team sports are a great way to build character. You develop a work ethic. Some of the guys that are out here volunteering are on the football team.

**Tyler:** I did wrestling my freshman year, but I quit. I didn't like it.

**Ed:** You've got to keep looking until you find the sport for you, son. What are your plans after you graduate?

**Tyler:** I don't know. Probably get a job somewhere. Probably not around here, though. There's no work.

**Ed:** You should make some plans for college. There are loans and scholarships if you start now and apply yourself. Hey, if you want, you can be on our volunteer team this afternoon. We could use some help bundling these branches.

**Tyler:** I can't stay. My mom wants me home soon. I'll go see if there's any twine in the garage.

## Where's the Twine: Facilitator's Notes

As the discussion unfolds, keep in mind that volunteers come with a lot of skills and gifts, but sometimes their main gift is not the one they are asked to use. In this scenario well-meaning volunteers think they are acting in the best interest of the people they are serving, based on their own professional knowledge. This calls for a great deal of sensitivity. Unsolicited advice can contain shaming messages: i.e., you are to blame; you aren't taking care of yourself; you're lazy; you don't deserve this help. At the same time, professional expertise in fields, such as medicine, finance, insurance or construction, can be very helpful when offered at the appropriate time and manner. The main lesson here is to be sensitive to the messages behind any advice you might offer.

### BEGIN WITH THESE QUESTIONS:

- From the perspective of the character you played, what were your predominant feelings during this scenario?
- Volunteers: what lessons did this scenario teach about being with someone recovering from a disaster?
- Community members: what advice would you give to the volunteers to make their interactions more sensitive or compassionate?

### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE CHARACTERS:

#### For Lottie

- What did you feel about Mary's advice about the soda?
- How do you feel about answering questions about where you were during the disaster?

#### For Mary

- What was your impression of Lottie and her grandson Tyler?
- Why were you offering her your professional advice?

**For Ed:** How did you feel about the fact that Tyler wasn't helping?

#### For Tyler

- If you didn't have to go home, how would you have responded to Ed's invitation to help with the yard work?
- How would joining the team of volunteers have made you feel?

## Say Cheese

*Overview: Three months have passed since massive storms caused flooding throughout the Tri-County region in early March. The community of Smallville, which lies along the river that flooded, was especially hard hit. Homes were severely damaged. Volunteers are now arriving in the community to help residents who can't afford contractors to hang sheet rock, re-tile floors, clean up yards and repaint the insides and outsides of homes. The local Episcopal Church, St. Andrew's, has transformed the former rectory on the property into housing for volunteers who are helping to repair homes in the area. St. Andrew's program is one small part of a very large disaster response, in which volunteers are traveling from all over the country to help the damaged area rebuild.*

### Characters:

**John Fitzgerald:** I am a retired farmer who sold the family farm 20 years ago. I live alone in the old farmhouse, but am planning to sell it and move into town. Volunteers are helping to tear down an old storage shed on the property.

**Mike Davis:** I'm a volunteer who is a history teacher at the high school. As a side, I collect mid-20th century antiques, which I buy and sell on eBay.

**Jess Daily:** I'm a volunteer who writes and takes pictures for the local newspaper back home. I'm the group's unofficial "photographer," and have been documenting the trip for an article to put in the parish newsletter.

**John:** I didn't realize how much stuff was in that shed.

**Mike:** We've got it just about cleared out. You have some amazing items here. Were these tools yours?

**John:** Yep. Though some of them are older than me. This place was part of a farm once. It belonged to my granddad and then my dad, who passed it on to me. But we gave it up in the 1980s, when we couldn't afford it any more. I haven't seen these old things in years. There a lot of memories in that tool box.

**Mike:** You could make a pile of money selling these old farm tools on eBay. I buy things like this online all the time.

**John:** I'm not so good on the computer. My grandson hooked mine up for me, but so far all I do on it is play Solitaire.

**Mike:** You should have someone appraise this stuff at least. Maybe you could hold an auction.

**John:** Hey look at this! You don't see these anymore. This is an old time milking stool. I used to sit on this thing as a kid. I should show it to my grandson. ... Hey, I bet you don't know what this is.

**Mike:** It looks like a metal watermelon.

**John:** This is an antique hog oiler. We used to keep some pigs. They rub up against the cylinder here and the oil in the barrel would keep the insects off of them. My grandson's in the 4-H. He'll get a kick out of this. And look at this old pencil. The John Deere salesmen used to give these out.

**Mike:** Hey John, if you're going to throw that out anyway, do you mind if I take it as a little souvenir? I collect old pencils.

**John:** Well, yea, you can have it. There are probably more of them in these boxes.

**Mike:** Look John, I could save you some time on getting an auctioneer out here. I'd be happy to buy the entire contents of this shed from you. Name the price. I've got my checkbook right with me.

**John:** Oh, I don't know. It's a lot of stuff. I'm not even sure what all's here. I'll think about it.

**Jess:** Hi Mr. Fitzgerald. I got some great "before pictures" of the shed with all the junk moved outside. These antiques are incredible! I got some great shots of those milk cans. I wonder if I can get a picture of you and the gang before we pull it down? Then I'll take an "after shot" once the dust has cleared.

**John:** I don't really like to have my picture taken. You all go on ahead.

**Jess:** It's for our church newsletter. The folks at the parish would love to see who all we helped.

**John:** Well OK, I guess if it's for the church newsletter....

**Jess:** Great! And if we have time, can I get your story too? I'd like to hear all about how you survived the storm, and what you're going to do now.

**John:** I'm not sure I'll have time for that. I'm going into town soon.

**Jess:** OK. We'll talk later. ... Hey everyone, photo time! Position yourselves around all this farm equipment. Some of you can sit on those old milk cans. Hey Mr. Fitzgerald, why don't you hold this pitchfork and stand next to Nancy, like in American Gothic? Ready? Say Cheese!

## Say Cheese: Notes for Facilitator

In this scenario, volunteers become very interested in the unique items they've pulled from an old storage shed that will be torn down. A disaster often requires people to sort through old things they didn't know they had, or haven't looked at in a long time. It's essential that volunteers be sensitive to people's privacy and to their memories. Some key points to reinforce:

- It's never OK to take "souvenirs" from a home that you're working on— even if it's in the trash pile, or the owner said they don't want it.
- Even asking permission to take it or buy it is not acceptable. Often people will say yes because they are too polite to say no.
- Photos can seem innocent. But in a disaster situation they can reinforce or highlight someone's poverty and loss and draw a contrast between the helpers and the person needing help.
- Turning someone's loss into a source of fun or lightheartedness for the volunteers ignores the pain the homeowner might feel.

### BEGIN WITH THESE QUESTIONS:

- From the perspective of the character you played, what were your predominant feelings during this scenario?
- Volunteers: what lessons did this scenario teach about being with someone recovering from a disaster?
- Community members: what advice would you give to the volunteers to make their interactions more sensitive or compassionate?

### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR THE CHARACTERS:

#### For John

- What do these old items mean to you, and what would you like to do with them?
- How do you feel about Mike's offer to buy them?
- How do you feel about the set up for the photo shoot?
- How would you feel if you saw that photo published in a church newsletter?

#### For Mike

- How appropriate was your request to buy the items?
- How appropriate was your request for the pencil?
- What if several group members asked Mr. Fitzgerald for souvenirs?

#### For Jess

- Why is it important to capture this trip in photographs?
- How would you like to use the trip photos? Who should see them?
- How could you take photos of the trip without compromising the privacy or the dignity of the people being served?



# The Intersection of Giving and Receiving

**ESTIMATED TIME 20 MINUTES**

## OBJECTIVE

To explore the power dynamics of giving and receiving, and to foster encounters where giving and receiving are valued equally.

## MATERIALS

- Flip chart and stand
- Markers

## INTRODUCING THE EXERCISE

Share these ideas in these words or your own:

- *Our desire to volunteer in disaster response comes from a great place: the value of helping another person. For Episcopalians and other people of faith, that value is a basic religious and scriptural tenet.*
- *Invite participants to turn to the person next to them and describe a time that they were in a giving role and a time they were in a receiving role. (If the group is small, all can share in the large group.)*
- *We've heard the phrase "It's Better to Give than to Receive" a million times. In the stories you just shared, which position did you prefer to be in? Why?*
- *In the giving/receiving relationship, which would you rather be? Show of hands: Who would rather be on the giving end? And who would rather be on the receiving end?*
- *Let's look at what's behind these preferences.*

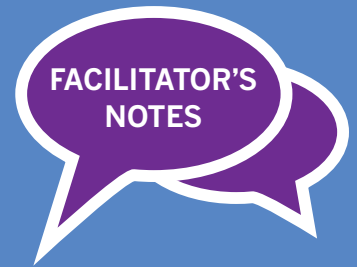
## DISCUSSION

Use two flip chart pages, one headed "giving" and one headed "receiving" Ask the group to generate words for each heading.

- How does **giving** make you feel? What words are associated with giving?
- How does **receiving** make you feel? What words are associated with receiving?

Look at the words the group generated. Under each category circle all the words that are positive. Does one indeed outweigh the other? You will likely find that words associated with giving are far more positive.

- Under receiving write the word "vulnerability". Ask the group, does this word belong under this heading?
- What does the phrase imply about the folks on the receiving end of our giving? (Gather some ideas from the group.)



Our culture values and encourages giving. Service is encouraged in schools and workplaces. Our impulse to volunteer also flows from this value.

The phrase "It's better to give than to receive" seems to sum it up well. But what does it say about the receiver? And how do we feel if we are in the place of receiving? Examining this rocky ground is very important when entering giving/receiving relationships.

In this discussion, participants will examine their own comfort level with giving versus receiving and how that might impact their view of those they are serving.

This exercise is recommended as an introduction to either of the Core Activities.

- Does how we give make a difference in how people feel about receiving?
- What are some guidelines that we can follow on our trip to ensure that people on the receiving end of our work don't experience some of the negatives we associate with receiving? (Gather and flip chart some of the ideas under the heading "Guidelines for Giving".)

## CONCLUSION

- Invite group members to share any insights or challenges they are taking away from the experience.
- Point out that in subsequent activities the group will explore ways to ensure that our giving upholds people's dignity and promotes resilience and wellbeing.
- Make sure guidelines are transcribed so that volunteers can refer to them on their trip.
- Save flip chart pages for posting during the **Core Exercises** or at other meetings.



# One Body, Many Parts: A Prayerful Beginning

**TIME:** 15-20 minutes

## OBJECTIVE

Participants name the gifts that they most identify with, and see themselves as part of a greater effort.

## INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE

Facilitator: Use these or other words to introduce the activity

*We may or may not know everyone here right now, but by the end of our volunteer experience we'll know each other – and ourselves – better than ever. That's the nature of doing something collectively. It's also one of the powerful components of being church. To get us started, we're going to listen to some advice that St. Paul gave to the early church in Corinth.*

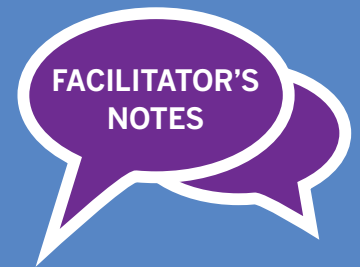
## PROCLAIM ALOUD THIS PASSAGE FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 12: 12-26

*Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. (NRSV)*

## DISCUSS

Facilitator: In these words or others, share these thoughts:

- *Paul's letter to the Corinthians was addressed to a diverse community, whose members came from Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds. They struggled with divisions over who was the most important and whose gifts were most valued.*
- *In response, Paul insists that this Christian community needed to see itself as Christ's body, that the members had numerous different roles in Christ's*



In this exercise, the group members identify personal skills based on St. Paul's description of the many parts of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). You can use this sharing as a way for people to introduce themselves.

work, and that they needed each other. Paul's words continue to ring true today as a call to unity in diversity.

### **Our volunteer group can benefit from Paul's words.**

- *The Gospel calls us to respond to the needs we encounter as Christ would. That's why we're here.*
- *We are part of a much larger response effort to foster resilience and recovery in the community we'll be visiting. We don't have all the gifts.*
- *The body of Christ is not only present in those who are responding, but also in those who are recovering. We are responding to a part of Christ's body that is suffering.*
- *Let's take a moment to place ourselves in the Body of Christ. When you consider the parts of the body, even beyond what Paul has listed here, which part do you identify with? Are you an ear that listens, an eye that sees need? Are you tonsils that filter and clean?*

### **SHARE**

Invite the group members to share their name and what part of the Body of Christ they represent and why. You can also invite them to draw their part of the body on a chalkboard or piece of flip chart paper, forming a figure that will ultimately look rather abstract with multiple parts.

### **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND PRAYER**

In these words or others share these points:

- *You'll notice that not all of the body was represented. We had more of some body parts than others. If we drew it on paper, we'd have something that Picasso might have painted or that the author of the book of Revelations dreamed up.*
- *The gift or part that you most identify with here is not the only gift you bring. In fact at different times, I bet you might identify with other functions of Christ's Body. They are all functions of a Christian life. And when you get back you might find you used gifts that you didn't even know you had.*
- *Use the prayer at the right to close your session.*

## **Closing Prayer**

As we prepare ourselves to bring our many and varied gifts to the need in the community we are visiting, let's offer the body gathered here to God for God's blessing. After each phrase, your response is: Make us one in you.

Let us pray:

Jesus, we are grateful. We thank you for the gifts you have given us and for the gifts that we have yet to discover. Bless what we came with, as we pray...

Jesus, we are willing. Our hearts have been tugged by members of your body in need. We want to make a difference. Bless what we hope to do, as we pray...

Jesus, we are small. We are just one part of your larger work of love. Help us to remember that it's not all up to us. It's mostly up to you. Bless our smallness, as we pray...

Jesus, we suffer. We don't have it all together. We fall and fail, often. And still you call us to serve. Help us to support one another and to receive graciously the healing that you have for us. Bless our vulnerability, as we pray...

Jesus, we rejoice. In our efforts we will not only represent you, we will encounter you. Open our hearts to the many ways you will make yourself known to us. Bless our joy, as we pray...

Amen.

## The Road to Recovery: Where Do We Come in?

**TIME** 15-20 minutes

**OBJECTIVE** Participants will learn about the lifecycle of disaster response and where they fit into it.

### MATERIALS

- Road to Recovery handouts for all
- Emotional Lifecycle of a Disaster handouts for all

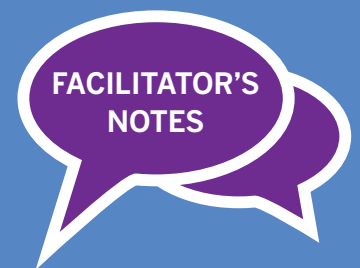
### EXPLAIN THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Distribute the handouts. In these words or others, share the following points to give an overview of disaster response and recovery.

- *The news is filled with reports of floods, storms, fires, and human-made tragedies. When is such an event considered to be a disaster? According to the United Nations, an event is a disaster when the losses are so great that they overwhelm a community's ability to cope using its own resources.*
- *While communities hit by a disaster mobilize their own resources, they often need additional outside help to respond to all needs and to recover fully. That can include non-local rescuers and responders, as well as financial support from outside donations and state and federal resources. And disasters often require the help of non-local volunteers like us, to clean up or to help rebuild.*
- *Recovering from a disaster follows a pretty consistent cycle. While no community ever goes back to way it was before a disaster, eventually it achieves a "new normal."*
- *Where do we volunteers fit in to the cycle of recovery? Look at your handout titled "The Road to Recovery." Where do non-local volunteers usually enter the picture? ... (Not until the section marked "long-term recovery.")*

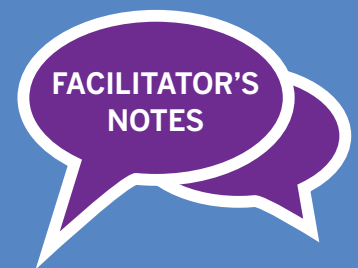
#### **Meanwhile a lot has been going on, probably for a long time:**

- In the rescue phase, the focus is on survival and saving people from danger.
- During the relief period, the community works to meet immediate needs.
- In short-term recovery, communities work together to create intermediate solutions to problems.
- In long-term recovery, communities work to create a "new normal" – economic self-sufficiency, emotional support networks, etc. This includes the volunteer work that we'll be doing. We will be helping people in this rebuilding process.



Every volunteer experience is different. When you give your volunteers an overview of what to expect on their trip, include these talking points about where their actions fit into the long "Road to Recovery" that is disaster response.

- A lot of time can pass between the original event and this time of rebuilding. That means some people have been waiting a very long time to get their lives back to normal, even if it's a new normal.
- Recovering from a disaster also has an emotional lifecycle, which you can see on your second handout.
- What part of the cycle does the news media tend to pay most attention to?
- During what part do volunteers like us arrive?
- What might cause people on the receiving end of disaster response to be disillusioned in the process?
- What might cause them to have upward and downward spikes? What needs to be in place for a new normal to develop?
- While we are offering a very specific type of response in our volunteer work, looking at the first handout, are there other ways that we can be involved in supporting ongoing recovery?

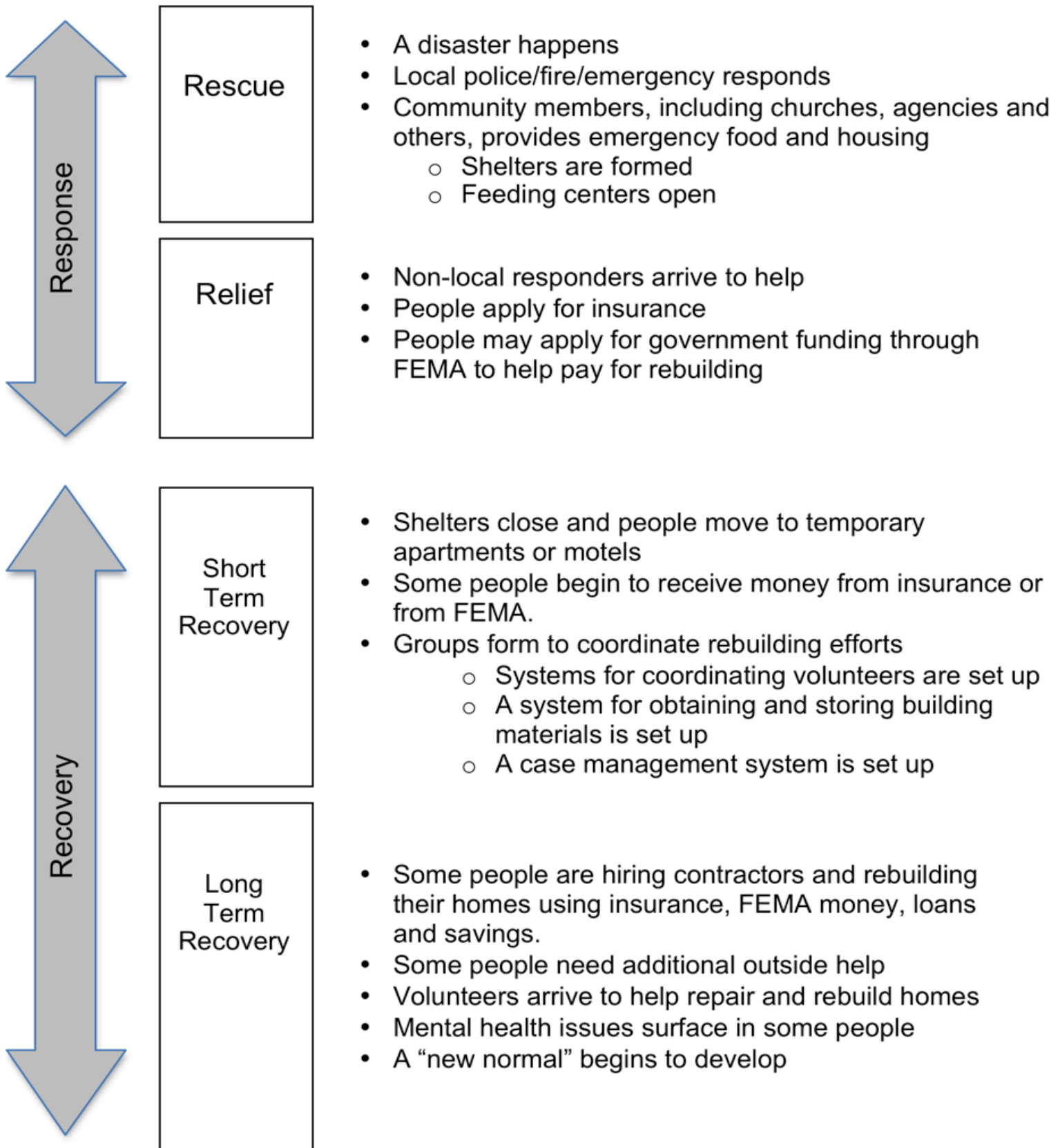


Often outreach in a disaster involves sending donated items and volunteers to an affected area. Here it's important to stress that collecting and sending lots of donated items, such as clothing and furniture, is not recommended. It can overwhelm a community's ability to store and use these items.

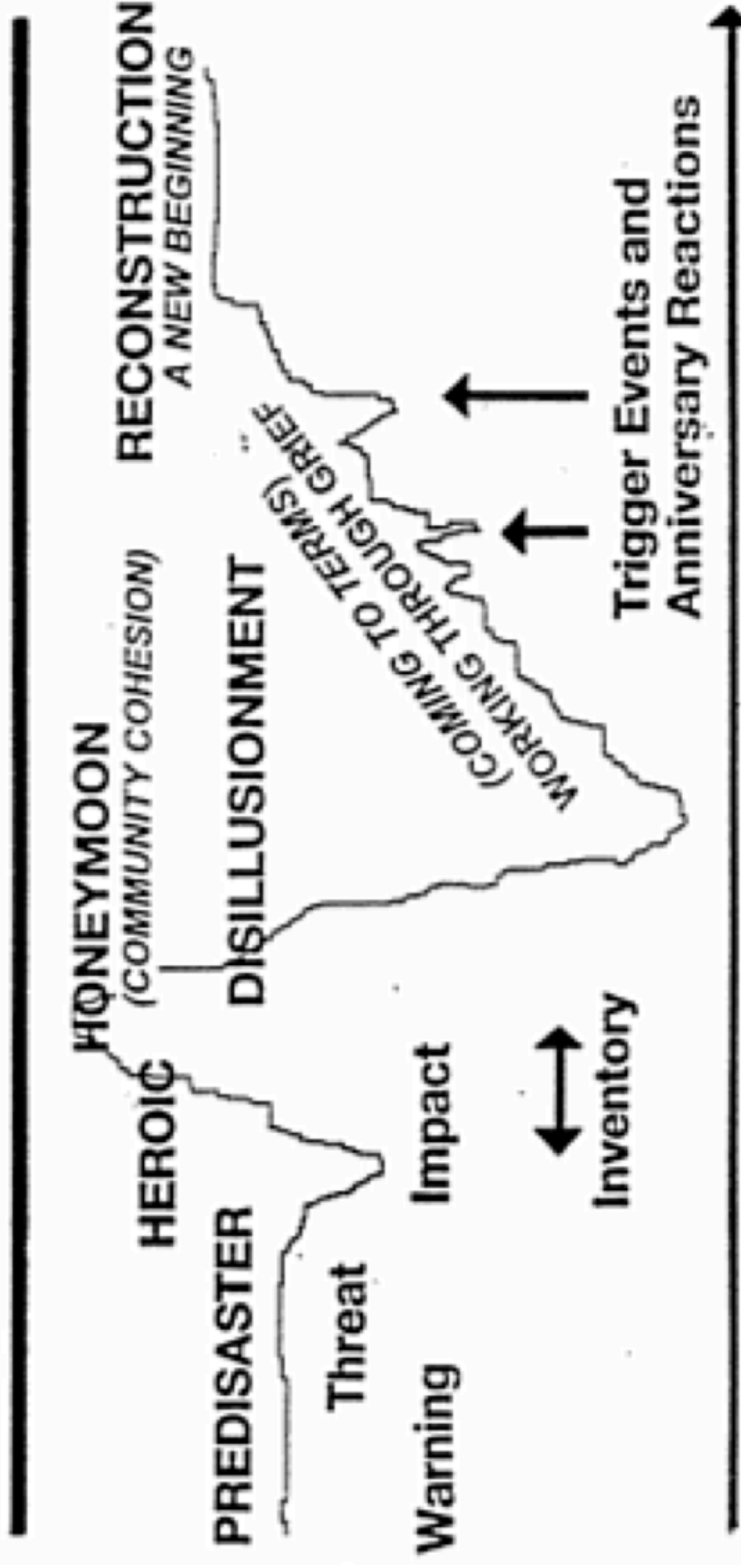
However, sending gift cards that can be spent locally and thus boost the local economy is a very effective response, as is sending financial donations to underwrite recovery efforts.



# The Road to Recovery



# Emotional Lifecycle of a Disaster



Out-of-town volunteers are most often used here



## Ears to Hear: An Exercise in Listening

**TIME** 30 minutes

**OBJECTIVE** Participants will practice being in the presence of another without inserting their own story or experience.

### INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

Use these or your own words to introduce the activity:

*When people are in crisis, they often benefit from talking with others about what happened to them. In our volunteer work, we may find ourselves in the position of listening when people want to share with us. It's not our job to initiate these stories or pry them out of people. But when we're in that sacred moment when someone wishes to share, the best thing we can offer is a listening ear, and welcoming, non-judging presence.*

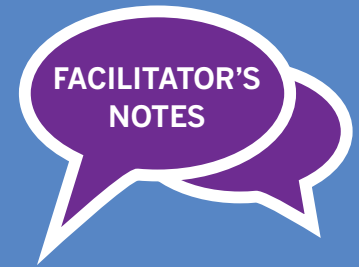
*Really listening to someone, whether that person is speaking or not, requires us to be present to them in a way that amplifies their story and quiets our own. How many of you have ever found yourselves thinking more about what you are going to say next and completely missing what someone is telling you?*

- *Listening is mostly being present with someone in the moment.*
- *If you're really present to someone, you are not trying to fix them or improve them or impress them. You're receiving them as they are.*
- *This listening presence is an essential skill, right up there with using a hammer or paintbrush. In this time of preparation especially, we're going to be listening carefully to our experiences, to our motivations, and to God's voice for direction on how to make this experience one that truly extends the body of Christ into places of need.*

### LISTENING CIRCLES

Have the group count off by 1s and 2s. Arrange the group in two concentric circles, with the 1s on the inside and the 2s on the outside, facing each other. Everyone should be standing and facing one other person. If the group is uneven, insert yourself in the group to make it even. (In this case you'll need to set a timer for each 90-second round so you can be present and are not watching the clock.) For each question, rotate one of the circles a few people to the left or right so that everyone is in front of someone new.

*Directions: You'll be invited to talk for up to 90 seconds on a topic that I'll assign you. One of you will talk and one will listen without saying anything. If you don't want to answer the question or if you don't have anything to say, you can be quiet for the rest of your minute. The listener may not speak or ask clarifying questions. When the time is done the listener looks the speaker in the eyes and says "thank you."*



In this exercise participants will spend 90 seconds answering a question while a partner listens without speaking. Then they will switch to a new partner and switch roles. In the encounter, listeners practice quieting their own stories as they focus on the storyteller.

Some of the questions may not be answerable for some; for example, one asks, "describe your older brother," and the result may be an uncomfortable silence.

The goal of these moments for the listener is two-fold: to experience standing in silence with someone in an awkward situation, and to empathize with those who are sometimes asked questions that they can't answer. The challenge is to resist filling in the blanks for people.

## ROUND 1

The 1s will speak and the 2s will listen: Explain what made you decide to go on this service trip.

## ROUND 2:

The 2s will speak and the 1s will listen: Describe either your best or worst volunteer experience.

## ROUND 3:

The 1s will speak and the 2s will listen: Describe a time when you were in need and someone helped you.

## ROUND 4:

The 2s will speak and the 1s will listen: Describe your older brother.

## ROUND 5:

The 1s will speak and the 2s will listen: Describe a missed opportunity, a time you wished you helped another person but didn't.

## ROUND 6:

The 2s will speak and the 1s will listen: Describe a time when someone wanted to help or reach out to you and you didn't want their help.

## LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

Re-gather in the large group to unpack the experience:

- What was the experience like for you?
- What was most comfortable for you – speaking or listening?
- When were you most uncomfortable?
- Did any of you notice your own stories surfacing while someone else was talking?
- What techniques did you use to stay focused on the other person?
- Did anyone find they did not or could not answer a question? What did you do? How did that feel?
- When there was no question, did you stand in silence or did you talk? How did that go?

## OBSERVATIONS TO CONCLUDE WITH:

- Half of listening is quieting our chattering monkey brains. It's important to notice when our own stuff is distracting us while someone else is sharing. When you're aware of it, you can bracket it, or mentally set it aside. You don't have to engage it.



- In this exercise some of us may have encountered uncomfortable questions, or been in the presence of someone struggling with something uncomfortable. Consider what this feels like. We will be visiting the homes of people who have been through some tough stuff. Note that our questions, especially those that ask them to recall the disaster, can be re-traumatizing. Our curiosity isn't helpful here.
- At the same time, someone we visit may want to initiate sharing their story with us. And this is where our gracious listening and compassionate presence comes in. Even if their story sounds crazy. Even if it might not ring entirely true. Even if it hurts to hear it. You are not expected to solve their problems, only receive them for a while.
- Don't flee from the moments where you are asked to be with someone in silence, without fixing, offering advice or filling in the gaps with your story. Consider that this might be how God is present to us all the time.
- What other lessons did this exercise teach us about deeply listening to people or being present to them?



# Foot Washing

**TIME** 15 -20 minutes

**OBJECTIVE** To prayerfully practice giving and receiving through the ritual of the washing of feet.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bible marked with the Scripture, John 13:2-15. Give this to the reader.
- One or two pitchers of warm water
- One or two basins to catch the water
- Several hand towels

## IN PREPARATION

- Arrange chairs in the circle.
- If the size of the group is large, you may want to use more than one basin and pitcher of water.
- If you have a clergy member in your group, you might invite her or him to be the prayer leader.
- Choose a participant who reads well to proclaim the scripture below. And provide a copy for their review.
- If you have participants who can lead music invite them to select some simple songs to begin and end the prayer service. The song Ubi Caritas is often sung a cappella during foot washing rituals.

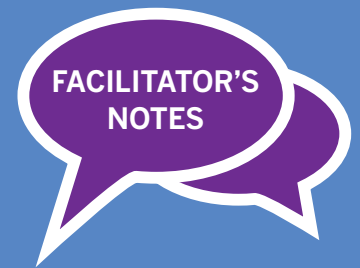
## THE LOGISTICS OF THE FOOT WASHING

- Invite the participants to remove their shoes and socks.
- During the foot washing, the leader begins by washing one of the feet of the person to the left. Simply pour water over the person's bare foot and dry it with a towel. The basins are for catching water, not for dipping people's feet in. Then the person whose foot has been washed washes the foot of the next person. Finally it ends with the leader's foot being washed.

## ORDER OF THE SERVICE

**OPENING SONG** (Optional)

**OPENING PRAYER** (At right)



As a closing prayer and a way of practicing gracious giving and receiving, this prayer service invites the participants to wash one another's feet.

The length of the service will vary depending on the size of the group. Make sure people know that they do not have to have their feet washed if they don't desire to.

**READING:** A reading from the Book of John (13:2-15)

And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.' (NRSV)

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

**LITANY OF GIVING AND RECEIVING**

Prayer Leader, invite the group members to briefly share one thing they would like to give during their volunteer experience and one thing they would like to receive. After each sharing the group responds with: "Jesus help us to do as you have done."

**FOOT WASHING**

Prayer Leader: *Jesus used foot washing as THE example of how he wanted his followers to treat one another. Perhaps he chose it because he knew it would drive people like Peter crazy. Peter didn't have a problem with being too proud to wash another person's feet. He felt too unworthy to have his feet washed. He felt vulnerable. But it was Jesus who was doing the asking. So he gave in.*

*Every Holy Thursday we do this uncomfortable ritual as a way to prepare for the discipleship that Easter invites us to. So it's completely appropriate to do it here. Because it makes a servant squirm. And it reminds us that there are two sides to giving and receiving. And actually, to serve well, we need to be good at both of them.*

Note: Give some brief directions on how the foot washing will proceed. *Ubi Caritas* is traditionally sung during this time.

**CLOSING PRAYER** (at right)

## Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Jesus, you called us to serve one another, calling for no one to place themselves above another. But it can be difficult for us to receive, to put ourselves in the place of need and accept help, or care, or assistance.

It means we're not always strong, not always on top of things, not always capable of all that is expected of us.

So bless us now as we receive one another. Give us the courage to be vulnerable in one another's presence. We pray this in Your name:

Amen.

## Closing Prayer

Let us pray.

Jesus, you said, "I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."

Help us to give graciously, always attuned to the vulnerability of those in need, and to their great capacity for courage and resilience. And help us to receive, both from those we serve, and from those who know our need.

As you welcomed care and compassion from those who loved you, let us also receive with grace and gratitude. We pray in your name.

Amen.

# Reunion: Sharing the Stories We Brought Home

**TIME** 90 minutes or more

**OBJECTIVE** To recognize in one another's story of the trip the themes of sensitivity, compassion and empathy that were part of the preparation process.

## MATERIALS

- Copies of Tell Me a Story handout for all
- Flip Chart and marker
- Strips of paper (about a quarter of a sheet), one for each person
- For closing prayer:
- Small table
- Basket
- Candle
- Bible marked with the reading, Isaiah 58:6-12

## START UP ACTIVITY

As participants arrive, give them a copy of the Tell Me a Story handout and invite them to quietly read through it and reflect on the stories that come to mind, highlighting three stories they would most like to share with the group.

## WELCOME (5 MINUTES)

- Welcome the group back together.
- Acknowledge their great work from the volunteer experience and any positive feedback you've received.
- Briefly address any loose ends, such as lost and found items, etc.
- Explain the logistics of the gathering. Note the need for confidentiality with the stories that are shared.

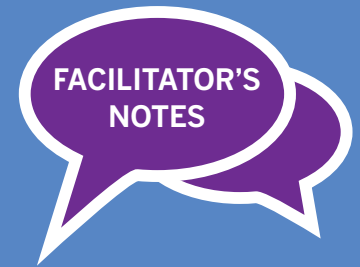
## SHARE THE EXPERIENCE (50 MINUTES)

### A. One-on-one sharing (10 minutes)

Invite the participants to turn to the person next to them and share one of the stories that they highlighted on the *Tell Me A Story* handout.

### B. Large Group Storytelling (40 minutes)

Using the five headings in the handout, invite individuals to share a story from the trip with the large group. Leave about 10 minutes for each section. Ask participants to keep their sharing to about 2 minutes. Make sure that new people have a chance to share before others offer more than one reflection.



Your group has shared an intense experience together. It has likely been tiring, emotional and challenging at times, as well as full of serendipity, joy, and a bit of heartbreak.

After they return, they will want to gather to debrief and to relive some of their favorite or most moving experiences.

This session provides time to tell stories, to explore them for the themes of compassionate response that were discussed in previous sessions, and to look ahead to how the experience continues to speak to participants' daily lives.

Such an experience doesn't need to be highly structured. It should include:

- A meal, where stories will be shared informally
- Time to look back at the experience and cherish it
- Time to look forward and ask questions or apply new skills or interests
- Time to pray

If you choose to include a meal in your session, schedule about two hours for the entire experience, leaving about a half hour for the meal itself. Placement of the meal is up to you, and it can overlap some of the sharing opportunities. If you have a lot of participants it can take quite a while for people to share, so keep this in mind if food must be served at a particular time.

## LINGERING QUESTIONS (15 MINUTES)

Facilitator, share these points in these words or others

*We've come back with experiences that we'll be thinking about for quite a long time. Some of us may have also returned with larger questions that this experience has raised for us. They might be questions of our society, or of our church, of the disaster response, or questions of ourselves.*

*Let's voice some of those questions now and capture them on the flip chart. We're not going to try to answer them here. Just note them for now.*

Facilitator's note: Keep this list for future use. You may find that some of these questions connect with work that the parish or community is doing in social justice or community service. They may be the seeds for new programs or an opportunity to call people together for follow up. You might even ask the group if anyone wants to meet again around any of these questions.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? (5 MIN)

*Questions are often the first step to further action. They are openings for God's spirit to move in us. And the stories that prompt our questions can stay with us for quite a long time, speaking to us in new ways. Given all that we've heard in our time together, name one action that you would like to take in your daily life that reflects something that you learned from this trip. Write it on the paper provided.*

Hand out strips of paper. Invite the group to write their actions on the paper and hold on to them. They will be used in the following closing prayer.

## CLOSING PRAYER SERVICE (15 MINUTES)

Arrange participants' chairs in a circle that ends on either side of a small table. On the table place an empty basket, a lit candle, and a Bible. Also place there a copy of the Scripture that will be proclaimed. Either hanging from the front of the table, or on a stand behind it, post the flip chart page that contained participants "lingering questions" from the trip.

If the group is inclined to sing, begin with an opening song.

Prayer Leader: *Let us pray.*

*Word of God. It has been said that you created humanity because you love stories.*

*Bless these stories we have told, and all the stories that swell our hearts from our time of service. Bless too the questions that arise from these stories, questions that may not yet have answers. Enter these stories like windows, and speak to us of where we have been and where you would have us go. Help us to listen to them again and again in the light of your holy Word, your holy people and your holy path. We ask this in Jesus' name:*

Amen.

**Scripture: Isaiah 58:6-12**



## OFFERING OF NEXT STEPS

Invite the group members one by one to place the slips with their action steps into the basket. They can read their action step to the group if they like, or they can place the action in the basket in silence. Ask them to wait until the person before them has returned to their seat before going up, to leave a small space for reflection.

When all the slips have been placed in the basket, the leader should lift the basket and offer this blessing.

### Prayer Leader:

*Welcoming God, the path to you always begins with a next step. So does the path to love, and the path to courage, and the path to justice, and the path to recovery. Bless our steps – big or small. Don't let us forget them or stray from them. Nag us if you have to. Or just remind us of the people we have encountered and the lessons they taught us about courage and wholeheartedness. We pray in Jesus' name:*

*Amen.*

End with a song or a group prayer, such as the Lord's Prayer.





