

Ministering with Children, Youth, Teens and Adults After a Disaster

Episcopal Relief & Development provides resources for faith communities dealing with disasters, including age-specific programs, prayers and activities.

If your congregation has just experienced a disaster within the community, in the world or even within the church itself, the church can serve as a place of listening and of grieving as well as resilience. As you minister to children, youth and their families immediately after a disaster, you can share certain qualities of Christian hope and presence with them, including:

- A calm presence
- A listening and attentive community where those affected may share their experiences, grief, pain and frustrations
- A sense of resilience and hope for the future

These resources contain several options for ministering with children, middle school-aged youth and teens in the days immediately following a disaster, either in a regularly scheduled church school experience or in a specially designed event.

All are based on traditional Christian spiritual disciplines and are designed to assist younger members in coping with the stress, confusion, sadness and anger they may feel after a disaster has impacted their homes, their communities or the world. Choose the options that you feel comfortable using and that work with your group.

Ministering with Children After a Disaster

FOR CHILDREN IN GRADES K-5

Our youngest children often derive great comfort from familiar routines. If you are weaving these activities into a regular church school time, include rituals and practices that the children are already familiar with.

This resource includes ideas for:

- Gathering and welcoming the group
- A presentation and discussion on Jesus, the Good Shepherd
- Response activities
- Prayer time
- Tools to take home

The complete resource can be found [here](#).

Ministering with Youth After a Disaster

FOR YOUTH IN GRADES 6-8

Our middle school youth need to be reminded in hard times that it's okay if their lives feel pretty upside-down. These materials help you have conversations with them in that space.

You might set the scene, explaining that it can be hard to return to our typical routines and familiar patterns. Familiar and comfortable would be really nice right now. That's why we often gather at church and as a Church in our darkest times. Our faith family loves familiar rituals and patterns. They are comforting when everything is a little messy and remind us that God is with us in all the mess. God's love for us doesn't change, even when the world around us does.

Resources and activities recommended for gatherings include:

- Gathering, checking in and welcoming the group
- Activities themed around Christ's light in the darkness
- Opening prayer
- Candle holder art activity and follow-up discussion
- Service ideas
- Closing prayer
- Additional activities
- Telling our stories
- Shipwrecked: Role-playing and discussion
- Opportunities for expression and reflection
- Tools to take home

The complete resource can be found [here](#).

Ministering with Teens After a Disaster

FOR TEENS IN GRADES 9-12

This resource contains ideas for teens to build a simple night prayer service, construct prayer beads for reflection and discern a service or community project where they can impact the lives of those affected by the disasters. When discerning their engagement, consider the following:

- What immediate needs are the teens aware of in the wake of the disaster?
- How can we honor the teens' experience of the disaster and help them process what they have witnessed and know about it? Be prepared to carefully and respectfully correct any misinformation that may surface.

- Who do the teens want to help? (Other teens? People who are poor or most vulnerable? Animals affected by the disaster? People no one else is helping?)
- What resources do the teens have to offer? (Physical labor? Fundraising skills? The ability to talk and visit? Ability to help fill out forms? Transportation?)
- What do the teens want to do most or do first? Do they want to respond once or in an ongoing way?

The complete resource can be found [here](#).

Ministering with Adults After a Disaster

In the days immediately following a disaster, news is still unfolding, lives are disrupted and loss is fresh. Here, the church can be an important source of “spiritual first aid” that provides stability, assesses people’s needs, offers comfort and care and refers people to community services and supports. This comprehensive and extremely helpful resource includes essays, classes and reflections on:

- The Emotional Needs of Adults After a Disaster
- Offering Worship When All Is Not Normal
- Hosting Storytelling Sessions
- Topics for Additional Programming
- Turning to Scripture After a Disaster: Four Bible Studies
- Expressing Grief: A Psalm of Lament
- Practicing Self-Care: Plucking Grain on the Sabbath
- Practicing Self-Care, Continued
- Coping Well: Walking with Ruth & Naomi
- Welcoming the New Normal: Breakfast with Jesus
- Books for Adults Coping with Trauma

The complete resource can be found [here](#).