



Episcopal  
Relief & Development  
Working Together for Lasting Change



# Restore & Renew

*Responding & Rebuilding when Disaster Strikes*

A TOOLKIT TO WORK TOGETHER FOR LASTING CHANGE



*Donated materials in Houston, Texas, after the 2023 winter storms. Episcopal Relief & Development supported the Episcopal dioceses of Texas and West Texas, along with local parishes, in their recovery efforts.*

*Thank you to our partners for the photos in this toolkit:*

**Sri Lanka:** National Christian Council of Sri Lanka

**Ghana:** Anglican Diocesan Development and Relief Organization (ADDRO)

**Guatemala:** Episcopal Diocese of Guatemala

**Malawi:** Anglican Council of Malawi

**United States:** Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina

**Europe:** Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe

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## Welcome to Restore & Renew – Responding & Rebuilding when Disaster Strikes

*You are a part of our extensive faith network and are invited to partner with us directly, sharing the work and the blessing of making lasting change.*

This is one of four toolkits centered on the priorities of Episcopal Relief & Development. These toolkits are designed to assist Faith Leaders across a variety of communities: in congregations, campus ministries, dinner churches, retreat centers and more.

The goals of these toolkits are:

1. To expand awareness of the expert and lifesaving work of Episcopal Relief & Development
2. To invite Faith Communities and individuals to financially support this work
3. To relieve faith leaders and their communities of issue-fatigue with practical tools; transforming their concerns into empowered action

Based on our four priorities, the toolkits are:

- **Joy & Wonder – Faithfully Engaging Early Childhood Development**  
Partner with Episcopal Relief & Development to equip parents and caregivers so young children can reach their full potential
- **Grace, Justice & Hope – For Women & Girls Everywhere**  
Partner with Episcopal Relief & Development to forge partnerships to reduce violence and advance equality
- **Nurture & Sustain – Action-Based Climate Resilience**  
Partner with Episcopal Relief & Development to invest in communities to strengthen resilience to climate change
- **Restore & Renew – Responding & Rebuilding when Disaster Strikes**  
Partner with Episcopal Relief & Development to provide emergency relief and long-term support in disasters

Using the resources in these toolkits, Faith Leaders will be guided by straightforward and accessible programs of campaign planning, prayer and worship and local community engagement and outreach. All four toolkits are available on our website [here](#).

You are a part of our extensive faith network and are invited to partner with us directly, sharing the work and the blessing of making lasting change.

Thank you.

## Introduction

When disaster hits a community, Faith Leaders and their communities have a unique role to play and a particular set of gifts to deploy.

Mobilizing these gifts during an unexpected crisis is no easy task. But with intentional preparation, including a vision of what an effective response looks like and a sense of how to use the tools and gifts at hand, Faith Leaders can be key players in their community's road to recovery. Here are some examples of how Episcopal Relief & Development has walked alongside helpers and survivors:

*When disaster hits a community, Faith Leaders and their congregations have a unique role to play and a particular set of gifts to employ.*

**North Carolina** — The highly active 2024 hurricane season caused an immense amount of destruction throughout the southeastern United States. Episcopal Relief & Development is working with partner churches and dioceses to reach impacted people wherever they may be, including those who have been displaced from their homes.

**Los Angeles** — In partnership with Episcopal Relief & Development, the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles is providing gift cards and cash deposits through electronic apps to people in need after the wildfires in early 2025 destroyed thousands of homes and displaced many. Financial assistance was disbursed by churches throughout the diocese that served as emergency shelters, charging stations and respite centers.

**Hawai'i** — Episcopal Relief & Development partnered with the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i to provide cash assistance, housing and relocation support after brush fires on Maui devastated the island in 2023.

**Ukraine** — Episcopal Relief & Development is working together with the ACT Alliance and the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe to serve refugees impacted by the war in Ukraine, providing support both within Ukraine and throughout Europe.

**Flooding Response** — Episcopal Relief & Development supported dioceses and churches in Western Texas after devastating flooding. Our support provided assistance to people affected by overlapping disasters and helped individuals and families build resiliency to withstand future events.

Many of the disasters we respond to garner little attention and often are under-resourced. We work through a global network of local church- and community-based partners to reach those most vulnerable to — and disproportionately impacted by — disaster, such as women, children, elderly people, persons with disabilities and those who lack access to government protections.

We will partner with you if and when the time comes — from the impact phase of any disaster through long-term recovery. Find your closest Episcopal Relief & Development Ministry Partner by emailing us [here](#).

Thank you for partnering with us to make lasting change.



## Our approach to disaster resilience: preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery

We take a comprehensive and inclusive approach to disaster mitigation—coordinating an interfaith response, and working with, and strengthening the capacity of local churches and community partners to prepare for and respond to disasters, efficiently and effectively. Moreover, we remain present and invest in communities long after the crisis, supporting them to heal, recover and rebuild.

Support Function	Intervention
 <p>Fostering a culture of preparedness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Forming disaster committees</b> that reflect the diversity of the community and inclusive of traditionally excluded groups, including youth, people with disabilities and the elderly</li> <li>• <b>Training</b> local church partners, disaster committees, and communities in disaster planning (preparedness, mitigation, and response)</li> <li>• <b>Prepositioning resources</b> so partners are able to access funds and supplies when an emergency develops</li> <li>• Investing in sustainable <b>early warning and communication systems</b></li> <li>• Identifying and socializing <b>evacuation routes and community drills</b></li> <li>• Developing household <b>disaster preparedness kits</b></li> <li>• <b>Conducting resilience assessments</b> to assess hazards, vulnerabilities and community capacity and assets to adequately mitigate and prepare for the potential risks associated with disaster situations</li> </ul>
 <p>Providing <b>relief</b> in the wake of a disaster</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conducting post-disaster community assessments</b>, including rapid social inclusion, and vulnerability assessments to identify households and community members disproportionately impacted by disasters—e.g., women, children, persons with disabilities, older migrants and other marginalized groups</li> <li>• <b>Distributing food aid</b> in the form of food baskets, cash for food and vouchers</li> <li>• <b>Facilitating cash transfers</b> where appropriate via physical and digital distribution</li> <li>• <b>Providing other emergency inputs</b> such as access to shelter and water, hygiene and dignity kits, survival kits, generators, transportation, fuel and other essential services</li> <li>• <b>Delivering trauma-informed psychosocial supports</b> (e.g., pastoral care, counseling) in response to trauma and to promote resilience</li> <li>• <b>Ensuring staff care and support</b> to safeguard the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of those working most proximate to the disaster</li> <li>• <b>Accompanying partners to establish institutional contingency plans</b> in instances where the partner has been adversely impacted by the disaster (e.g., compromised infrastructure, lack of staff availability)</li> </ul>
 <p>Supporting long-term <b>recovery &amp; resilience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Creating linkages to government and private assistance</b> (e.g., public benefits and schemes and social support programs) to help stabilize households</li> <li>• <b>Strengthening livelihoods</b> aligned with local market realities to increase economic stability and resilience</li> <li>• <b>Coordinating with other recovery actors</b> (e.g., other international and local NGOs) to build resilience links/collective impact for the most marginalized</li> <li>• <b>Providing cash and asset transfers</b> to stabilize households</li> <li>• <b>Establishing savings &amp; lending groups</b> to promote financial inclusion and access to capital, particularly for marginalized groups</li> </ul>

Foundational to our disaster resilience efforts is the Pastors and Disasters Toolkit. The toolkit is a resource manual and workbook of practical tools designed to strengthen partners' capacity to respond more effectively to the increasing severity and frequency of disasters, especially within the context of local Anglican or Episcopal churches and organizations. The Toolkit is unique in that it accounts for and builds upon churches' existing human, technical and structural assets and resources—thereby heightening awareness of available networks and improving monitoring mechanisms that enhance and increase local capacity.

*"We always make it a point to include disaster preparedness in our organizing phase. The toolkit guided us on what to do to be able to come up with committees, tasks, data, etc. **It opened our ideas on things we can do to maximize our local assets in preparing and strengthening our disaster plans.**"*

*— Regional Officer, E-CARE Foundation,  
The Philippines*

## Pastors & Disasters: A Toolkit for Community-Based Disaster Resilience

The Pastors & Disasters toolkit strengthens partners' capacity in **four disaster resilience competencies**:

1. **Community mobilization:** Supporting and encouraging community members, including establishing Disaster Committees that represent that diversity of the community. Disaster Committee members are trained in disaster preparedness, mitigation and response.
2. **Resilience assessment:** The assessment builds on the skills, knowledge and resources available within and outside the community and takes into account existing vulnerabilities. A variety of community members are engaged through the assessment, such as civic leaders and historically marginalized groups, including but not limited to women, elderly people, people with disabilities and children.
3. **Disaster resilience implementation:** Developing and carrying out a resilience management plan to increase resilience to disasters, utilizing existing possessions, property, networks, local resources and other assets to reduce risk and increase resilience.
4. **Disaster response:** Executing added-value relief and recovery activities that address both short-term and longer-term needs in collaboration with other humanitarian actors.



*Photo of partners in Zimbabwe conducting a post-disaster community assessment*



## Working together for lasting change

### CENTRAL AMERICA EMERGENCY FOOD RELIEF & RESILIENCE PROJECT (CENTRAL AMERICA, 2021-PRESENT)



In 2020, hurricanes Iota and Eta, layered atop of the COVID-19 pandemic, devastated the region and exacerbated already deep social and economic challenges faced by rural communities in Central America. Responding to these challenges, particularly food insecurity and corresponding health declines, Episcopal Relief & Development established the Central America Emergency Food Relief & Resilience Project with support from the S.L. Gimbel Foundation, a component fund of The Inland Empire Community Foundation, and a private donor. Episcopal Relief & Development partnered with the Episcopal Diocese of El Salvador, the Episcopal Church of Guatemala's

Diocesan Development Office, the Anglican Agency for the Development of Honduras of the Episcopal Church of Honduras (AANGLIDESH), and the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD), to procure and **deliver 4,468,610 meals to 28,430 people within 6,649 households** through 20 food distributions across El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua (data from year one of the project).

Beyond alleviating hunger, the project had a positive impact on household expenditure patterns. The endline evaluation determined that:

- **Household food expenditures decreased.** At endline in all four countries by an average of 33% and total household expenditures fell by an average of 13.3%. Household expenses such as education (25%), health (9%), fuel (8%) and farming (23%) increased in all countries. Project qualitative survey responses suggest this increase is due to households' reduced food expenditures.
- **Household saving patterns improved.** At project close, monthly household savings increased in all four countries by an average of 163%. Partners reported participants had been able to save in food procurement and use the savings to purchase planting supplies, buy medicines, pay for school fees, purchase clothes and shoes for their children and make repairs their homes.

To learn more about Episcopal Relief & Development or the Central America Food Relief & Resilience Project, visit our [website](#).

## Overview of the Toolkit

### **How to Begin: Discerning a Call to Respond, Local Leadership and Setting Goals**

Spend time learning how other communities have engaged in this work and what a difference it has made. Learn how to have conversations about setting goals and getting a feel for your community's capacity to help you and your neighbors. Familiarize yourself with Episcopal Relief & Development's exhaustive Disaster Preparedness Planning Guides.

### **In Worship: Planning & Praying for Disaster Relief & Recovery**

Those who have experienced floods, fires, shootings and other disasters have learned how to gather, pray, lament, question and finally rebuild as people of the resurrection. Learn how to pray in the midst of disasters, how to pray with youth and children, and how to come together as a community to partner with us to observe Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday.

### **Formation: Study & Grow**

Here you will find resources for holding Bible studies and tools for conversing with children, youth, teens and parents. This section also includes resources to help Faith Leaders understand the basics of readiness and the emotional life cycle of a disaster and how to support Faith Communities in being prepared to act when disaster strikes.

### **Outreach & Creative Community Engagement**

Be inspired by learning how we partner with friends around the globe to make lasting changes in communities affected by disasters. Learn how you can join other Faith Leaders and communities in this work. Complete your own Asset-Based Community Development inventory and watch your gifts grow as they are deployed to help your community. Also, find practical checklists for household readiness, including a plan on building disaster kits for others. Consider becoming a Ministry Partner with Episcopal Relief & Development.

### **Fun & Fundraising with Episcopal Relief & Development**

Learn how to partner with Episcopal Relief & Development by hosting a successful fundraising campaign as well as through worship, fellowship and making creative connections with our *Gifts for Life* program.

Visit Episcopal Relief & Development's website to view the [complete toolkit](#) and access printable handouts and other resources including prayers, studies, outreach ideas and other suggestions to explore on your own, with links.



# How to Begin: Discerning Local Leadership and Setting Goals

*“You cannot do everything, but you can do something.”*

— Edward Everett Hale

Episcopal Relief & Development supports dioceses and churches around the world in leveraging their gifts to meet the needs of their neighbors post-disaster. Using Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), we focus on a community’s existing strengths, which energize change, development and service from within. Learn more about the amazing results of this process and how you can support it [on our website](#).

Your faith community can also benefit from using the ABCD method. Your first task is to explore your existing assets and discern the interest level of your faith community regarding their passion and capacity for responding to disasters.

Doing so will help you more effectively set goals from a space of vocation where assets and desire to help overlap. In times of disaster, we feel compelled to do *something* and need help to discern what makes the most sense for the faith community. As American author and historian Edward Everett Hale reminds us, “You cannot do everything, but you can do something.”

Here are just a few examples of how Episcopal churches have used their gifts to respond to disasters:

- Provided temporary shelter after an apartment fire using their gifts of a warm building, clothing drive donations and their focus on outreach ministry
- Created a federal form brigade using their gifts of strong interfaith relationships, organizing skills, cell phones and knowledge of available federal benefits
- Expanded a feeding ministry using their gifts of an existing feeding ministry, strong social media presence and hospitality

For more examples of Episcopal churches meeting the needs of their community, check out Episcopal Relief & Development’s [Resource Library](#).

### In this section, you will find:

- » *After the Fall: A Story of One Congregation's Entry into Disaster Preparedness*
- » *Conversations and Goal Setting: Starting Preparedness Ministry in Your Community of Faith*
- » *An Overview of Episcopal Relief & Development's Disaster Preparedness Planning Guides*



*Asset-based community development training program in the Philippines. Episcopal Relief & Development partners with E-CARE (Episcopal Community Action for Renewal and Empowerment Foundation), the relief and development arm of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines, to help communities build on their strengths through an Asset-Based Community Development approach.*



## After the Fall: A Story of One Congregation's Entry into Disaster Preparedness

One Sunday afternoon, members of St. Gabriel the Archangel Episcopal Church in Cherry Hills Village, Colorado, gathered outside for our annual church picnic. It was a beautiful day, and everyone enjoyed the warmth, sunshine and fellowship.

The afternoon took a frightening turn when a member with heart trouble felt lightheaded and then passed out. Fortunately, other members of our congregation were able to call for prompt medical attention.

But it left the congregation questioning our capacity to respond to similar emergencies in the future. The rector and members realized the importance of equipping the congregation to respond to an emergency and began developing a plan.

St. Gabriel the Archangel began the visioning process for our church preparedness plan by imagining what situations would be most likely to occur in their congregation. These included an ice storm, fire, security incident and medical emergencies. We established clear response protocols and identified skills that members would require to respond to those situations.

A major asset of our congregation was our team of ushers, who already felt called to serve our faith community. They were familiar with members of our congregation and with the church grounds, so they were likely to have situational awareness of an event as it unfolded. We invited the ushers to participate in our preparedness training sessions and accept responsibility for taking or directing actions in an emergency. We invited other members of the congregation to participate in these preparedness trainings as well. We offered coffee and donuts during the training, and members saw the training as a fellowship event where they all learned together. Once members completed the training, they became part of our Church Safety Ministry. Participants said they shared what they learned with their families and workplaces.

As we have developed this ministry, we have come to see that just as we are all part of the body of Christ, we can all contribute to this ministry.

For instance, although some of our members have limited mobility and cannot perform techniques like CPR, they can assist others who are more physically able. We want our members to know that we are all capable of doing something to contribute to the safety of our congregation. [Read more](#) about our training and preparedness.

By fostering a culture of preparedness, we have made our goal of having a church ready for any hazard more achievable. This has allowed St. Gabriel's to better fulfill its mission, utilize its many strengths and expand its capacity to serve God's people and the community.

*Mason Whitney, the Church Safety Warden at St. Gabriel the Archangel in Cherry Hills Village Colorado, reflects on the journey his congregation took from a frightening picnic incident to establishing a church safety ministry in their parish. Read the full story of St. Gabriel the Archangel Episcopal Church [here](#).*

## Conversations and Goal Setting: Starting a Preparedness Ministry in Your Community of Faith

**You've got this!** Our approach to care for communities begins with where you are. Using these materials, your faith community can discern what unique gifts you have that can be a part of responding to disasters. These gifts include big things like emergency shelters and generators and smaller things like time, attention, communication skills and other ways to extend help and support to your community in times of need.

An important asset is an **abundance-focused** mindset that expands our understanding of our gifts (or assets). Congregational gifts can be described using the **"Five Ps"**:

**People:** Members of your congregation and people connected to your ministries

**Property:** The church building, parking lot, supplies and rectory

**Purse:** Financial assets

**Posture:** Your church community's culture, such as being outreach-oriented or committed to seeking and serving Christ in all people

**Program:** Ministries and activities at your church — everything from Bible studies to homeless outreach ministries

**We can help!** Episcopal Relief & Development uses an asset-based approach that equips Faith Leaders to prepare for and respond to disasters. We also teach faith communities about the basics of disasters and how to become empowered to share their community's gifts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. While certainly not required, you are encouraged to identify both your Diocesan Disaster Coordinator and your Episcopal Relief & Development Ministry Partner to assist you in leading workshops and raising awareness and enthusiasm for this work.

*The two strongest indicators that predict how a church will respond after a disaster are:*

1. *an awareness of congregational gifts & limitations*
2. *a willingness to try*

***Don't hesitate to help!***

## Goal Setting — the ABCD Approach of Discerning a Faith Community's Gifts & Assets

The first step is to examine the assets your faith community already has. We do this using Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). A helpful worksheet is included in the [Outreach & Creative Community Engagement](#) of this toolkit.

We've also designed a training module that teaches Episcopal Relief & Development's disaster response methodology and some basics of a disaster's life cycle. Our hope is that participants will feel empowered to share their congregational gifts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in their communities. The training sessions summarize the gifts you have determined you possess as a faith community and how you can deploy them following a disaster.

The four objectives of the sessions are:

1. Identify and share congregational gifts
2. Introduce Episcopal Relief & Development's disaster response methodology
3. Discuss the potential needs of people made vulnerable after a disaster
4. Brainstorm and share potential congregational responses to a disaster

The entire program can be found [here](#), including handouts and references for further study.



*Coconut tree distribution to help with climate resilience in Sri Lanka, supported by the Anglican Diocese of Colombo and Episcopal Relief & Development.*

## An Overview of Episcopal Relief & Development's Disaster Preparedness Planning Guides

In his letter to the new churches in Asia Minor, Paul spoke of readiness as one of the primary attributes needed to be effective in proclaiming the Gospel (Ephesians 6:15).

*Readiness is a path  
to peace of mind.*

Readiness is a path to peace of mind. Practicing readiness reduces anxiety, helping us follow Matthew's counsel that we "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

We recognize some congregations might not yet be ready for a complete disaster planning process. That's why doing the ABCD goal-setting exercise in the previous chapter is important. Get to know the capacity and resources of your specific faith community and then determine which of our guides will best support your goals.

We provide three entry-level resources for the work of readiness:

1. The **Bronze Level** of the Preparedness Planning Guide includes the most basic information your community will need in times of disaster. Download it [here](#).
2. The **Silver Level** version also includes necessary basic information to protect parishioners and church property in times of disaster. It adds the foundation for congregations interested in responding to their most vulnerable neighbors after a disaster. Download it [here](#).
3. The **Gold Level**, called "The Comprehensive Version," is designed to help a congregation plan for a disaster. It includes taking inventory of physical and human assets and determining its niche in assisting vulnerable people in the larger community. Download it [here](#).

In the [Formation](#) section of this toolkit, you will find an example of how the work of these guides can be deployed during a sample disaster.

When we are confident in our preparedness, we can spend more time and energy being present to today. As Timothy reminds us, "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).

As communities of faith, we are called to be prepared to assist after a disaster. In addition to reducing anxiety and providing peace of mind, our planning has four important goals:

- To mitigate the damage to our church community's buildings and belongings
- To be able to resume the business of the church as soon as possible, post-disaster
- To support our parishioners in times of crisis
- To assist our vulnerable neighbors after an emergency

An exhaustive list of the tables of contents, cross-referencing the bronze, silver and comprehensive guides, follows.



<b>Table of Contents for Comprehensive, Silver and Bronze Planning Guides</b>	<b>Comp.</b>	<b>Silver</b>	<b>Bronze</b>
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<b>Property Assets: What do you have that you need to protect?</b>	<b>23</b>		
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• Congregational Resources	32	14	
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# In Worship: Planning & Praying for Disaster Relief & Recovery

A primary vocation for faith communities is to worship God. Through the rhythms of ancient and modern prayers, we make connections to God, one another and the longings in our own hearts. Reinforcing shared beliefs and values strengthens our resolve to carry out the other half of our vocation: to proclaim the Gospel, to tell the story over and over again about resurrection, about new life after what seems like the end.

In our inherited stories, we are reminded to show compassion to ourselves and everyone who may be suffering in the world. Episcopal Relief & Development reminds us to hear God's call to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being. We are reminded in our confessions that we must pay attention to the things we have done that hurt others, including things done on our behalf.

## **In this section, you will find:**

- » *The Blessing of Lament Following Disasters*
- » *Offering Worship When All Is Not Normal*
- » *Blessing a Home Lost in Fire — For Families*
- » *Additional Prayers & Liturgical Reminders in Response to Disasters*
- » *A Reflection and Prayer for Adults Who Minister with Youth*
- » *How to Observe Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday*

## **Other Ideas & Resources:**

From Building Faith: God is With Me: A Guided [Workbook](#) for Children After Experiencing a Disaster

From Good Inside: [Communication Reminders](#) for Parents Navigating Natural Disasters, including wildfires, with their children.

## The Blessing of Lament Following Disasters

*Liturgy is a great gift of the Church. It validates and normalizes the negative emotions of the grieving process and helps to provide a connection to a supportive community.*

As a member of the Program Group on Peace and Justice in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, the Rev. Julie Morris shared her belief that “as a Church, we have a special ability and special responsibility to make space for our communities to feel tremendous loss and grief resulting from gun and other forms of violence.” She felt that the biblical tradition of lament seemed the most appropriate way to honor the emotions and experiences of the community in the aftermath of violence and loss.

[Read the full story](#) of her experience as a priest serving a college campus following a mass shooting.

Inspired by “Together in Sorrow, Together in Action,” the Newtown Action Alliance’s national vigil for gun violence, Julie and the team at her congregation held a service of Holy Eucharist entitled “Together in Sorrow.” It was a service of Holy Eucharist held on the evening of November 9, 2014.

The readings during the service represented the biblical precedent for lament and reminded them how lament is a practice that draws us closer to love and loss. For the Scripture readings, they chose:

- Job 2:11-13: Job’s friends sit on the ground and weep with him for seven days and seven nights
- Acts 20:36-38: Paul bids farewell to leaders of the church in Ephesus, and they weep because they will not see him again
- John 11:32-36: Jesus weeps at the news of Lazarus’s death

Based on their experience, Julie shares these important lessons learned through tragedy, which can help inform your planning when offering liturgies of lament for your community:

- There is intense social pressure to return to normal after traumatic events, but people are often still floundering.
- Some “red-flag” behaviors to watch out for include increased distress with work and school projects, shame, flashbacks, withdrawing from social activities and engaging in higher-risk activities. If you notice someone exhibiting these signs, consider referring that person to a mental health professional.
- Emotional and spiritual needs after traumatic events will change over time. Ongoing spiritual and psychological support is often needed, even for individuals who were not directly touched by the traumatic event.

- Identify and promote support groups for survivors to participate in. These may include groups that address trauma, grief or substance abuse or those that encourage mindfulness. Personal referrals and announcements in worship bulletins can be used to publicize these groups.
- Go to where the people are and offer pastoral support. Be prepared to answer a lot of emails and voicemails from individuals who try to contact you while you are out.
- Advertise worship services using many channels, including flyers, social media, worship announcements and personal invitations.
- Liturgy is a great gift of the Church. It validates and normalizes the negative emotions of the grieving process and helps to provide a connection to a supportive community.



*A gratitude wall in Wiesbaden, Germany, created during a workshop led by the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, aims to honor Ukrainian refugees. Episcopal Relief & Development supports the Convocation and their efforts with refugee resettlement.*



## Offering Worship When All Is Not Normal

When the Episcopal Church of the Ascension was damaged by the Sierra Madre Earthquake in 1991, the rector, the Very Rev. Canon Michael Bamberger, made several adjustments so that the church could continue offering services until the building was repaired. Below are his reflections and suggestions on how to shape and maintain liturgy after a disaster.

### Communicate that Worship Will Happen

If it's possible, reinstate regular Sunday worship as soon as possible, even if it's in an alternate location. Announce that worship will happen and when and where it will be. Use every media avenue: websites, email, social media, phone trees, signs and posters and, if possible, a press release to local TV and radio. If evacuation orders are in place, consult with local law enforcement authorities about access issues.

### Respect Vulnerability and Plan for Safe Worship

Folks may have been traumatized even if they had no property damage. They may be grieving for any number of reasons. Be sure that the space you choose for worship is safe. This may mean having building inspectors assess the structural integrity of the space where worship will be held. And be attentive to the need for emotional "safe space."

### Celebrate & Mourn

Worship after a disaster celebrates survival and resiliency and holds up those who helped. But it also acknowledges loss, uncertainty and fear. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, people often find comfort in worship that seems familiar. It is always appropriate to pray aloud for local community leaders and other worshipping communities affected. A Public Service for Healing from the [Book of Occasional Services](#) and materials from [Enriching Our Worship](#) can be adapted to speak to the congregation's needs.

At the same time, it is critical that church leaders proclaim the Resurrection. Without being Pollyanna-ish, believe that recovery will be achieved. And when that seems impossible, remember the phrase from the 12-Step Movement: "Fake it 'til you make it."

### Be Ready for Newcomers

In the wake of a disaster, people often seek out community. They may be looking for answers to "why this happened." They may have a newly discovered need to "belong somewhere." Whatever the reasons that may draw visitors and newcomers, a disaster can be an opportunity to welcome and embrace new members. In addition to planning for more people in the pews, be ready to provide extra fellowship through coffee hours and church potlucks. People need to gather, be nourished and share their stories and hear the stories of others in times of crisis.

## Blessing a Home Lost in Fire – For Families

Missy Morain served as the director of program ministry at St. Matthew's, Pacific Palisades for 15 years. In September 2024, she began her service as the Diocesan Missioner for Christian Formation in the the Episcopal Dioceses of Los Angeles. When the fires began in the Pacific Palisades in January 2025, the community she had loved and served for so long was deeply impacted. Seeking ways to help parishioners who had lost their homes, not just from St. Matthew's but from other area churches she was now serving, she adapted an existing liturgy for use by families seeking solace and relief. We are grateful to share it here, with her permission.<sup>1</sup>

*If you have pictures of your former home, you could display them on the table or altar or pass them around.*

### A Blessing

A breath prayer is a short meditation that focuses on breathing as a way to connect with God. Choose a comfortable position where you can focus on your breath. As you inhale, say or think the first part of the prayer; as you exhale, say or think the second part.

#### OPENING BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: You hold

Exhale: All my tears.<sup>2</sup>

*(Repeat three times)*

#### COLLECT

Loving God, our strength in times of despair, in our grief, grant us your comfort. In our confusion and worry, grant us your peace. Amen.

#### **Psalm 23** *(said in unison or responsively)*

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.

He revives my soul and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;

For you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me.

You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;

You have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from "Blessing A Home Lost in Fires" written by Kay Sylvester for the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles Bishop's Commission on Liturgy and Music

<sup>2</sup> Craig, K. "Every Season Sacred: Reflections, Prayers and Invitations to Nourish Your Soul and Nurture Your Family throughout the Year." Tyndale House Ministries. 2022.

## PRAYERS

Leader: We thank you, God, for our home where we lived. We remember the entryway where friends and family were welcomed, and through which we entered into each new day.

**All:** We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember the rooms where we gathered with family and friends, and we give thanks for every welcomed visitor.

**All:** We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember our table, where we ate together, planned together, prayed together. We are grateful that Jesus was always our guest.

**All:** We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember the kitchen. We thank you for every meal prepared, for cookies baked, for holiday meals prepared, for school lunches made and for our favorite meals.

**All:** We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember the bedrooms, where we rested, slept and played, where we felt safe and loved.

**All:** We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

*Invite each family member to share their favorite room and a favorite memory of that space.*

Leader: What room has a favorite memory for you?

*After all have shared*

Leader: We remember all the rooms where we gathered, laughed, cried, celebrated and lived together.

**All:** We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember our neighborhood, our parks, our time shared with our neighbors, our farmer's markets, our walks and bike rides, our July Fourth parades and our community celebrations.

**All:** We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

Leader: We remember the places we loved to go together: our favorite restaurants, ice cream and yogurt shops, churches and schools.

**All:** We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

*Invite each family member to share their favorite memory of the community you lived in together.*

Leader: What are your favorite memories of our community?

*After all have shared*

Leader: We remember our home where we gathered, laughed, cried, celebrated and lived together.

**All:** We thank you, God, for our home where we lived.

*A moment of silence*

**The Lord's Prayer** (said in unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

Leader: God, help us remember that the gifts of every celebration, holiday and regular day are still with us. Bless the ending of this season when this was our home, and grant us strength as we turn toward what is next. *Amen.*



## Additional Prayers and Recommendations for Faith Communities in Response to Disasters

Be with us, dear Lord, through all sorrow, loss and difficulties we face.  
Help us to face difficult times with courage.  
Help us to know that you are with us, even when we see only darkness.  
Help us to know your love and to share this love with others.  
In Christ's name, Amen.

From [Ministering with Adults following Disasters, Episcopal Relief & Development](#)

God of all consolation,  
grant to those who sorrow the spirit of faith and courage,  
that they may have the strength to meet the days to come  
with steadfastness and patience;  
not sorrowing without hope,  
but trusting in your goodness;  
through him who is the resurrection and the life,  
Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

From *A New Zealand Prayer Book - He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* (used with permission)

### Recommendations for Faith Community Gatherings During an Epidemic

An epidemic is a large-scale outbreak of an infectious disease, such as influenza, norovirus or coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Leadership, communication and liturgical decisions should be made in collaboration with church leadership and health authorities and based on local practices and safety concerns.

### Leadership & Communication Recommendations

- Remind congregants not to come to church or meetings if they feel ill.
- Expand or remind clergy of your policies regarding sick leave for clergy.
- Do you have supply clergy available?
- Do you encourage lay-led Morning Prayer services?
- Remind leaders that they should model the behaviors you're asking from congregants, especially about staying home when ill.

### Liturgical Recommendations

- General hand hygiene: Encourage clergy and lay eucharistic ministers to wash hands with soap and water before services and use hand sanitizer before distributing communion; also provide hand sanitizer for congregational use
- Sharing of the Peace: Remind parishioners that waving is acceptable instead of shaking hands or hugging.

- **Serving & Receiving Communion:** Those concerned should abstain from communion or receive “in one kind,” which means receiving the bread only. Hands are the dirtiest part of the body; therefore, intinction is not recommended. If choosing intinction, allow the Eucharistic minister to intinct the Eucharistic bread for you — it’s just as valid to bow to the chalice. Intinction is only feasible when wafers are used. Using the common cup with proper purificator procedure presents a relatively low risk. Open the purificator to its full size so that a clean part of the purificator is used for each communicant. It may be necessary for the minister to use more than one purificator. Wipe the chalice between communicants on the inside as well as the outside.

Additionally, check with your bishop and local health officials for their protocol.

If there is an outbreak in your area, consult local public health authorities. You might consider taking the following steps:

- The fonts should be drained, and the practice of dipping hands in the water should be discontinued.
- Use new water for each person during baptism.
- Home visits should be restricted to ordained persons, and Eucharistic Visitors should not be deployed until further notice.
- Do not pass the offering plate. Instead, instruct ushers to bring it around or set it in one spot and have people come up to put in their offerings.



*Dorothy is a member of her local Savings with Education group in Malawi. Dorothy was one of the members who attended fertilizer training and was able to buy fertilizer and seeds for her farm with a loan. She also attended training to learn how to grow additional crops.*

## A Reflection and Prayer for Adults Who Minister with Youth

*Written by Elizabeth Cervasio, Missioner for Children, Youth and Campus Ministry, the Episcopal Church in Colorado*

### A SAFE SPACE TO LAND

As my six-year-old once told me, “You’re not me. You don’t know how I’m feeling inside.” From the mouths of babes. Because she was right. I didn’t know how she was feeling. All I could do was imagine how I would feel at that moment. And the love I have for her overwhelms me with a desperate need to fix that feeling. To fix *her*. But feelings can’t always be fixed. And when we let that drive to “fix” overtake us, we usually end up doing too much.

Having grown up as a teenager in Colorado during the Columbine school shooting and having my senior trip to New York City drastically changed because of 9/11, I can tell you that adults often say too much in an attempt to fix things. And I get it; silence is uncomfortable. We often go to the worst place in our brains in moments of silence and wonder if we are doing enough or saying the right thing. We feel like we are the adults, and the youth are looking to us to have all the answers, and what if we are failing in that? But if my eighteen years of youth ministry, both at the parish level and at the diocesan level, have shown me anything, it’s that the youth are looking for a home. They are looking for that safe place. They don’t need their adults to have all the answers; in fact, they prefer if their adults don’t always know but rather walk in companionship with them as they figure it out together.

The youth in your community need to know without question that they are in a safe community where they can wrestle with the tough stuff and won’t be judged. Where they can be their authentic selves, free to feel what they feel. After a disaster has upended the security of a teen’s life, that safe space to land and just be is more important than ever.

### So, what do you do after your youth have experienced a tragedy?

Maybe it’s a natural disaster, maybe it’s a school shooting, maybe it’s the death of one of their own. It can be so easy to jump into “fix mode” here. We brainstorm ideas: they need a prayer service, they need a way to seek justice, they need to talk, they need (fill in the automatic adult idea here). But do they need any of that? Maybe. But you’ll never know unless you ask. Ask the question: “What do you need? Right now, what will help you feel safe?” You may be met with that all-too-familiar silence or the equally terrifying answer, “I don’t know.” That’s okay.

### Hold the space.

As adults, we often want an answer to *our* questions right away. We forget that sometimes, we genuinely don’t know what we need — youth are no different. If you’re met with one of those answers (and yes, those are answers), reassure them that it’s okay not to know and not to be okay. Then, remind them that the church is a safe place for them just to be.

### **What interests or activities are your youth interested in?**

Do you have movie buffs? Throw a movie night complete with pizza and all the best junk food. Bonus points if you get homemade cookies from a church member. Is your group into something unique? After the COVID-19 pandemic, we had a church that was super into robotics, so they met and built and talked about all things robotics. Have some caffeine junkies? Pop to the local coffee shop for board games and java.

### **The point is to meet the youth where they are.**

Be a stable presence in their lives, with no agenda other than being present with them. Maybe it takes one meeting like this to rebuild stability. Maybe it takes a handful; maybe it takes more.

### **Not sure what they need now? Ask.**

You may be thinking: I *did* ask, and I got met with silence, and then I felt the need to open my mouth and ramble. Change the way you ask. Maybe this time, bring sticky notes and ask the youth to write down their answers, fold them up and slip them into a jar at some point in the night. Let them do it on their own time. Just like us, being on the spot and having to answer can be intimidating. Let them know that you and other trusted adults from the church are always there to listen if they need to talk — and that they can ask for a time to chat on a sticky note, too. After you ask, you will either have a new way forward, or you will continue to show up the way you are.

*After a disaster has upended the security of a teen's life, a safe space to land and just be is more important than ever.*

Remember, the best thing you can do is be a constant, loving presence. Be in the moment, and don't worry about having all the right answers.

### **A prayer for leaders with hurting youth**

God of healing, be with me now. My youth are hurting, and I want so desperately to take their pain away. As a father who watched his own son's suffering, be with me and hold my heart. Help me remember that my own needs and desires come after the needs and desires of my youth. Help me to close my mouth and open my ears. Create in me a safe space, a presence that holds the pain without fixing it, that leaves room for the Holy Spirit to move among the wounds and bring peace that passes understanding. *Amen.*

## How to Observe Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday

Praying together as a community of faith amplifies the power of our prayers, reinforces our desire to be healing agents of God's world and reminds us to give thanks for opportunities to do so.

The Episcopal Church [designated](#) the first Sunday in Lent as Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday. Every year, faith communities are encouraged to celebrate and partner with our lifesaving work on this or another convenient Sunday.

If you or your faith community has made the theme of this toolkit a part of your expressed priorities for a season, feel free to adapt the prayers and readings herein for this observance. Doing so will raise awareness of your partnership with Episcopal Relief & Development and invite others to participate in your team's ongoing work.

Consider setting up a display or informational table during fellowship, scheduling a presentation at a forum or study group, or holding a special event to heighten this ministry.

Resources to help you with this observation, including prayers, petitions, proper prefaces and more can be found on our website under Church Resources and at [this link](#). Sample sermons are available on Vimeo [here](#).

You can also visit [Forward Movement](#) where you can order complimentary resources for your observance, including beautiful informational bulletin inserts and fliers, pew envelopes, *Gifts for Life* catalogs, bookmarks and brochures and Lasting Change boxes.

*"When we are privileged to experience the genuine love of God, we are compelled to enthusiastically and freely give it to others. And when we do, we can overcome every manner of evil. We experience God's love through daily choosing to see Christ in the other, loving our neighbor as ourselves. It is an intentional practice. It is not easy... but it is my hope for each of us that we can pass God's love on to all."*

— An Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday sermon by  
Chad Brinkman, Director, Faith Fundraising,  
Episcopal Relief & Development





# Formation: Study and Grow

The mandate of Episcopal Relief & Development comes from Jesus's words:

*"LORD, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?"*

*And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."*

— Matthew 25:37-40

The mandate of Episcopal Relief & Development comes from these words from Jesus found in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus reminds us: we are called to serve all in need. Reading the Bible and sharing our stories helps us discover anew the wisdom and resilience our ancestors showed when they served communities in difficult times. This wisdom gives us confidence to have faithful conversations that give us hope and set us in action to be ready when disaster strikes.

## **In this section, you will find:**

- » *Turning to Scripture After a Disaster — Four Bible Studies*
- » *Let's Talk: Family Conversation Starters*
- » *An Overview of How a Faith Community Can Be Present to Children & Youth Following a Tragedy*
- » *Empowering Faith Communities to Act in the Event of a Disaster*
- » *Creating a Disaster Preparedness Plan — An Example of the Basics*
- » *Ministering with Children, Youth, Teens & Adults After a Disaster*

Our [website](#) has several engaging Bible studies, which have been contributed over the years as we learn about healing and recovery in our work. Browse through them to find the topics your community seems most interested in exploring together.

## Turning to Scripture After a Disaster: Four Bible Studies

The Word of God is at the heart of the prayers of the church; it is woven through our liturgies and flows through our Book of Common Prayer. Scripture can be especially meaningful after a disaster because the words often originated with the prayers and reflections of people who turned to God to help them understand and weather difficult times.

The four Bible studies that follow address some of the needs that many adults experience after a disaster: expressing grief after loss, practicing self-care, coping well and welcoming a “new normal.” The sessions can be used as an adult forum series or by groups already meeting for prayer or discussion. They can also be utilized in quiet prayer and reflection at home.

The topics are:

1. Expressing Grief: A Psalm of Lament (Psalm 6)
2. Practicing Self-Care: Plucking Grain on the Sabbath (Matthew 11:28-12:8)
3. Coping Well: Walking with Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:1-11a; 14-18)
4. Welcoming the New Normal: Breakfast with Jesus (John 21:1-14)

### NOTE TO FACILITATORS

If you are facilitating a small-group session, you might want to include the following in your setup:

- A small central table with familiar spiritual symbols such as a lighted candle, cross and Bible
- Copies of the Study Guide for all participants

You may also provide additional handouts about coping after a disaster or information about local resources and programs. Include contact information for pastoral care providers and other resource providers in your congregation.

## Session One — Expressing Grief: A Psalm of Lament

### OPENING PRAYER

Dear Lord, be with all who seek comfort and support this day. Help us to find your guiding words and presence in those around us. Help us to find listening ears and kind words as we seek to bring our thoughts and prayers to you. In Christ's Name, Amen.

### SCRIPTURE: PSALM 6

Note: This Scripture can be read silently, aloud or in parts. It can also be read several times, such as with the Scripture reading practice of *Lectio Divina*. Other psalms of lament include Psalm 3 and Psalm 13. These can be read as well for comparison or additional discussion.

#### PSALM 6

*LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger; do not punish me in your wrath.*

*Have pity on me, LORD, for I am weak; heal me, LORD, for my bones are racked.*

*My spirit shakes with terror; how long, O LORD, how long?*

*Turn, O LORD, and deliver me; save me for your mercy's sake.*

*For in death no one remembers you; and who will give you thanks in the grave?*

*I grow weary because of my groaning; every night I drench my bed and flood my couch with tears.*

*My eyes are wasted with grief and worn away because of all my enemies.*

*Depart from me, all evildoers, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping.*

*The LORD has heard my supplication; the LORD accepts my prayer.*

*All my enemies shall be confounded and quake with fear;  
they shall turn back and suddenly be put to shame.*

## COMMENTARY

Sometimes, our grief is too large for words. Speech begins to fail us. And prayer? How do we pray for things we cannot name? Our Scriptures were written by people under similar duress, and they expressed their ache in the poetry of the psalms. After Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, psalms were used to mourn this life-altering event. Many other books of the Old Testament were written by Israelites living in exile, trying to deal with being uprooted and coping after the loss of home, family members and self-determination. When we pray the psalms, we pray with centuries of spiritual ancestors who grabbed hold of God and wrestled during times of unimaginable strife. Their words become ours, helping us to wrestle with God when nothing makes sense.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION, REFLECTION OR JOURNALING

- Read the Scripture again quietly to yourself. Which parts resonate with your own experience?
- What are you grieving the loss of? In the wake of recent events, what feelings are you struggling to understand?
- How would you describe your feelings about God right now?
- Where have you experienced God's absence and/or presence in the disaster?
- In what ways would you like to echo and add to the psalm?

## CLOSING PRAYER

God of all consolation, grant to those who sorrow the spirit of faith and courage, that they may have the strength to meet the days to come with steadfastness and patience; not sorrowing without hope, but trusting in your goodness; through him who is the resurrection and the life, Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

(New Zealand Prayer Book — He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, p. 833)

## Session Two – Practicing Self-Care: Plucking Grain on the Sabbath

### OPENING PRAYER

Dear Lord, be with all who seek comfort and support this day. Help us to find your guiding words and presence in those around us. Help us to find listening ears and kind words as we seek to bring our thoughts and prayers to you. In Christ's Name, *Amen*.

### SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 11:28-12:8

Note: This Scripture can be read silently or aloud. It can also be read several times, as with *Lectio Divina*.

#### MATTHEW 11:28-12:8

*"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

*At that time Jesus went through the cornfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.*

*When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless?"*

*I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."*



## COMMENTARY

After a disaster, it's easy to be overwhelmed by the urgent needs around us. As Christians, we are taught to help people in need and serve others. In this passage, Jesus acknowledges the disciples' need for rest and nourishment.

The sabbath was instituted to remind people that their worth and dignity were not based on their achievements. Jesus breaks the sabbath law while simultaneously upholding it. He knows the disciples are human and have needs like hunger that need to be met if they are to follow Jesus on the long road ahead. This story may ring true for you if you are prone to skip meals, forgo sleep and ignore your other needs in the name of an urgent cause like disaster relief.

Rest and pacing are needed if we are to sustain energy through the rebuilding process. It is not your job to repair your community single-handedly. Our achievement-driven culture makes it easy to feel guilty when we are not constantly helping after a disaster. But even Jesus needed to rest. Jesus often retreated from the suffering crowd to rest and pray in silence. If Jesus needed rest and nourishment, we do, too. If we take care of our own needs, the work of long-term recovery will be more sustainable.

Sometimes, actions that appear Christ-like, like working nonstop without rest, are counterproductive and damaging. If the disciples cared about looking or feeling holy, they could have remained hungry, but Jesus knew that how we treat our bodies matters. We are not machines. We need to build communities and work groups where we encourage each other to take time to rest, eat and grieve.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION, REFLECTION OR JOURNALING

- Read the Scripture again quietly to yourself. What parts resonate with your own experience?
- What were your patterns of self-care before the disaster? What are they now?
- How have you made time to rest since the disaster?
- What is one way you can find rejuvenation this week? How could others support you in your self-care?
- What does a community that encourages self-care look like to you?

## CLOSING PRAYER

God of all consolation, grant to those who sorrow the spirit of faith and courage, that they may have the strength to meet the days to come with steadfastness and patience; not sorrowing without hope, but trusting in your goodness; through him who is the resurrection and the life, Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

(New Zealand Prayer Book — He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, p. 833)

## Session Three – Coping Well: Walking With Ruth and Naomi

### OPENING PRAYER

Dear Lord, be with all who seek comfort and support this day. Help us to find your guiding words and presence in those around us. Help us to find listening ears and kind words as we seek to bring our thoughts and prayers to you. In Christ's Name, Amen.

### SCRIPTURE: RUTH 1:1-11A; 14-18

Note: This Scripture can be read silently or aloud. It can also be read several times, as with *Lectio Divina*.

#### RUTH 1:1-11A, 14-18

*In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons.*

*The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth.*

*When they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had considered his people and given them food.*

*So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband."*

*Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."*

*But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die – there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.*

## COMMENTARY

This passage describes Naomi and Ruth's dire situations: they are vulnerable, displaced and struggling to survive. Naomi's family moves to Moab to escape famine. The death of their husbands leads Naomi and Ruth to return to Bethlehem.

Both moves are motivated by grief and the basic need for survival. Each woman copes with her suffering in a different way. Ruth copes by clinging to her mother-in-law and pledging her life to Naomi. Orpah copes by returning to her family. Naomi copes by returning to her people. Later in the story, she will change her name and express her displeasure with God.

Being frustrated by our loss of control, depression, grief and stress is normal; even Ruth's well-known pledge to follow Naomi wherever she goes contains a note of desperation. How we cope with a crisis affects our well-being and the well-being of our family, friends and community.

According to pastoral care providers, instances of domestic violence, addiction and depression can often increase after a disaster. It can be difficult to cope with the everyday stresses of life after a disaster has destroyed all semblance of normalcy.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION, REFLECTION OR JOURNALING

- How has the disaster affected your sense of home?
- How has the disaster affected your primary relationships with family, friends, neighbors or co-workers?
- What is helping you hold on? What is helping you cope with the current disaster?

## CLOSING PRAYER

God of all consolation, grant to those who sorrow the spirit of faith and courage, that they may have the strength to meet the days to come with steadfastness and patience; not sorrowing without hope, but trusting in your goodness; through him who is the resurrection and the life, Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

(New Zealand Prayer Book — He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, p. 833)

## Session Four – Welcoming the New Normal: Breakfast with Jesus

### OPENING PRAYER

Dear Lord, be with all who seek comfort and support this day. Help us to find your guiding words and presence in those around us. Help us to find listening ears and kind words as we seek to bring our thoughts and prayers to you. In Christ's Name, Amen.

### SCRIPTURE: JOHN 21:1-14

Note: This Scripture can be read silently or aloud. It can also be read several times, as with *Lectio Divina*.

#### JOHN 21:1-14

*After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.*

*Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the LORD!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the LORD, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.*

*When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."*

*So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."*

*Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the LORD. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.*

## COMMENTARY

For the followers of Jesus, his crucifixion was a life-shattering disaster that threatened their very lives. Jesus's execution reminds them of the Roman Empire's constant threat. In the passage before today's reading, the friends of Jesus are hiding out in a locked room. The disciples have lost their friend and leader; they are afraid Roman leaders will kill them too. When Jesus appears to them, he invites the disciples to leave the fear-filled room and live again.

In the long life cycle of a disaster, the end point is often called the "new normal." Things will never be exactly as they were before the disaster, but there is now a new stability, and new patterns become familiar.

In the passage we just read, Simon Peter is trying to create a "new normal" after Jesus's death. Peter tells his friends he is going fishing, and they choose to join him. Fishing was the livelihood of many disciples before they followed Jesus. In returning to their old profession, they are trying to get their lives back after the disaster. But the task is not easy. They are not the same people they were before they met Jesus. All night, the fishing nets come up empty.

The resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples. And though he doesn't identify himself, they know him. He aids the disciples in a familiar and miraculous catch of fish. Life can't return to how it was before Jesus died. Life lived in the assurance of Jesus's resurrection, empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit, will become the norm for his followers. And it will always be new.

## QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION, REFLECTION OR JOURNALING

Like the disciples, many of us have experienced change since this disaster. We've been stretched and confronted with parts of ourselves we didn't know existed. What have you noticed about yourself since the disaster?

- The new normal will look different for each of us. What parts of your new life are welcome? What parts of your new life are challenging?
- As you enter the new normal, what are you finding in your nets? What has been added to your life?
- The disciples encounter the resurrected Christ in an unexpected way. How have you encountered Jesus since the disaster?

## CLOSING PRAYER

God of all consolation, grant to those who sorrow the spirit of faith and courage, that they may have the strength to meet the days to come with steadfastness and patience; not sorrowing without hope, but trusting in your goodness. Through him who is the resurrection and the life, Jesus Christ our Savior, *Amen*.

(New Zealand Prayer Book — He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, p. 833)



## Let's Talk: Family Conversation Starters

### Legend:



Adults ask Children/Youth



Children/Youth ask Adults



For Everyone

Let's Talk cards were created in response to requests from teens who wanted a framework to talk to their parents about important topics - not just about relationships and school but about what's going on in the world around them.

Let's Talk cards are designed to be open-ended, without a simple yes or no answer to create a time of storytelling. Sometimes, parents and grandparents feel they must always have answers for children, but that's not true. A story that includes your feelings will connect you to your children much more than having a concrete answer. Talking with children and youth about disaster can be fraught; some families have direct and traumatic experiences while some have only witnessed disaster from a distance. While it's okay and healthy to talk about adult feelings of anxiety and fear and to validate those feelings from our children, the idea for these conversations is to build a sense of hopeful empowerment for everyone.

All of these questions are designed to bring families together. Be prepared for answers that surprise, delight and even startle you. For instance, if your teen says they don't think you ever listen to them, take a breath and ask how they think you could be better at talking and listening to each other. If your youth is playing music with references to violence, don't just make them turn it off. Ask open-ended questions about what they like about that music, how it makes them feel and share why it concerns you, without judgment.

### Instructions:

For durability, print the document on cardstock if possible. Cut the cards on the horizontal dotted lines and place them in a jar or basket on a table. There are specific questions for adults to ask children/youth, children/youth to ask adults and questions for everyone to ask and answer. Share the bible verse or psalm for each category to begin the conversation.

Let's Talk Cards can be used over several weeks at mealtime, as a family road trip resource, table talk cards for intergenerational formation sessions or printed and mailed to families in your congregation. There are also blank cards for you to add a conversation starter that is meaningful to your family or community. The possibilities are endless!

We hope you enjoy the conversations!  
Episcopal Relief & Development

## What is a Disaster?



### Adults ask Children/Youth

What is a disaster? Have you heard of any damaging storms, floods or fires in our area, or in the news?

*Or for children who have experienced major storms, flooding or fires: How did it feel when that big storm or flood happened in our area? What do you remember?*



### Children/Youth ask Adults

Tell us about storms or disasters you remember; what happened, and how did people get help? How long did the disaster last, and when was it over?



### For Everyone

Let's look at Episcopal Relief & Development's [3 Phases of a Disaster](#) together to learn more.

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/us-disaster-program/disasterhelp/>

*Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.*

*I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. (Psalm 69:1-2)*



## What Happens to Communities Enduring a Disaster?



### Adults ask Children/Youth

When a whole community experiences a disaster, how do you think people react? How do they help each other?



### Children/Youth ask Adults

How does our community, including the local government, plan for and protect us in emergencies or disasters? Who would help people get to safety, who would make sure everyone had food to eat and clean water to drink?



### For Everyone

Let's look through these photos of disaster relief from Episcopal Relief & Development together, and think about what might be happening to help the community that's been harmed: [Responding to Disasters and Rebuilding Communities](#).

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/press-resources/responding-to-disasters-and-rebuilding-communities>

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

*(Matthew 11:28-29)*



## Being Prepared as a Family



### Adults ask Children/Youth

Who would you call if you needed help? Let's make a list of those people and their phone numbers and addresses, and we can include it in our emergency kit. Emergencies happen; being ready can help us feel safer and less afraid.



### Children/Youth ask Adults

What are the types of disasters that happen where we live? What would we need to do in a bad storm? Where would we go if we needed to leave our house?



### For Everyone

If we needed to leave our house to be safe, what would we want to take with us? Let's create an emergency kit with extra medicines, keys to our house and cars, lists of family and friends and their contact information. What else should we include?

*But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. (Luke 12:39-40)*



## Being Prepared as a Community



### Adults ask Children/Youth

What have you learned at home and at school about keeping yourself and others safe?



### Children/Youth ask Adults

How do adults plan for when something goes wrong? What adults outside our family could we talk to about being prepared for a disaster?



### For Everyone

Episcopal Relief & Development has a "[Pastors and Disasters Toolkit](#)" for our church leaders. Maybe we can meet with them to talk about how our church community might respond in a disaster.

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/resource/pastors-and-disasters-a-toolkit-for-community-based-disaster-resilience/>

*Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.*  
(Hebrews 10:23)



## Disaster Resilience and Response around the World



### Adults ask Children/Youth

What kind of disasters do you think happen in different parts of the world? What do you think makes it harder or easier for different communities to prepare for and respond to disasters?



### Children/Youth ask Adults

Have you ever traveled to do disaster recovery or response work, or do you know anyone who has done that work?



### For Everyone

What are the Bible stories of disasters we know? Why is it important to know the history of people facing these life-changing events?

\* look through a Bible or do an internet search

*You shall not see your neighbor's donkey or ox fallen on the road and ignore it; you shall help to lift it up.*  
(Deuteronomy 22:4)



## What We Can Do When We Hear of a Disaster



### Adults ask Children/Youth

What do we want to pray for when we think about the community currently enduring a disaster? We can think about children, adults, animals, communities, first responders and more as we pray.



### Children/Youth ask Adults

What are the best ways to help a community that's experiencing a disaster? Why is it a bad idea to send our old clothes and books and toys right away?



### For Everyone

How can our family help those who are suffering? What would we be willing to sacrifice to raise some money to donate to disaster victims? What happens to any money we might decide to send? We can look here to get an idea: [Disaster Recovery](#).

*And let all survivors in whatever place they reside be assisted by the people of their place with silver and gold, with goods, and with livestock, besides freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.*  
(Ezra 1:4)



## Recovery After a Disaster



### Adults ask Children/Youth

What are the feelings you think people—adults and children—experience during a disaster? What about afterwards, when recovery and rebuilding need to happen?



### Children/Youth ask Adults

How long do you think it takes for a community to rebuild after a disaster like a flood or an earthquake? What steps do they have to take to recover and rebuild?



### For Everyone

Remember the [3 Phases of a Disaster](#) we looked at. Let's try to tell the story together of a community that faced a particular disaster and what it was like for them, from the beginning of the event to when they may have felt 'recovered.'

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/us-disaster-program/disasterhelp/>

*Then the heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites—everyone whose spirit God had stirred—got ready to go up and rebuild the house of the LORD in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:5)*



## My Family—Conversation Starter



### Adults ask Children/Youth



### Children/Youth ask Adults



### For Everyone



## My Family—Conversation Starter



### Adults ask Children/Youth



### Children/Youth ask Adults



### For Everyone



## An Overview of How a Faith Community Can Be Present to Children & Youth Following a Tragedy

Sue Vogelmann taught kindergarten and first grade for more than 10 years at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. She then served as Church School Director for children, youth and families at Trinity Episcopal Church in Newtown for 17 years. While on staff at the church, she continued to work part-time at the school and was working there when a shooting in December 2012 killed 20 students and 6 staff members. She wrote this resource for [Building Faith](#), an online resource hub sponsored by Virginia Theological School.

### TURN OFF THE NEWS

In the immediate aftermath, turn off the news — at least keep it off when children and teens are within earshot. The worldwide media that descended on our little town was invasive and often gave incorrect information, which was very confusing and upsetting to our community. Hearing the name of my hometown on national news every day for weeks, months and still, ten years later, was and is so jarring. Turn off the media.

### KEEP (SOME) ROUTINES & ALL PROMISES

Keep to some routines. You can adjust things that must be canceled, but keeping some comforting routines will help children see that not everything has changed. Keep all promises you make to children and youth during the crisis. In other words, do not make promises you cannot keep. It is important that they can count on you and your church community when all else is in chaos.

We held our Sunday morning services at their usual times and had church school in our usual 11 classrooms. I did adjust the curriculum for the weeks immediately following, as needed. For younger children, we stuck with the Gospels of Advent since the lessons were exactly what they needed to hear: *“And the angel said, ‘Do not be afraid.’”* We had to take a break from any violent Old Testament story lessons for a few years. I gave a handout about what to say and what not to say (a simple one-page version) to all my volunteer church schoolteachers who were terrified about having to talk to the kids. Have that one-page sheet ready ahead of time.

### HAVE PRAYERS READY

Formation leaders responded to my online pleas for child-centered prayers because my brain just couldn't sift through all that was happening enough to allow me to write. Have some prayers ready. You'll be praying a lot.



## CREATE A LIST OF GRIEF & TRAUMA COUNSELORS

We had therapists and counselors join the classes and adults on that first and some following Sunday mornings, including anniversaries. Have a list of trusted professionals ready. Do not wait until you are bombarded by phone calls and emails from people “wanting to help.” You should have a list of safe grief and trauma counselors so you know who to call.

Find help to cope with your own fears. Provide adult support so that the adults can provide for the children. *Self-care is not an option; it's a requirement.* There were a lot of dark circles on the faces in our pews. Have a self-care support system ready. We had an increase in suicides, divorce rates, substance abuse and more after our tragedy. Share the professional resources for these situations often and make it okay to ask for help — please don't wait for a tragedy.

## THERAPY DOGS!

We had therapy dogs join us for weeks/months/years. A tail wagging at the altar rail for communion made us smile (during a time when there were very few smiles). The dogs helped many children return to school and attend other events in our community. These furry comfort animals were such a big part of our lives.

I once overheard my 10-year-old son tell his cousin about our therapy dogs. His cousin said, “You are so lucky to have dogs at school every day.” My son responded, “Yeah, but the reason we have them is really bad.” Look for your local therapy animals; maybe consider bringing some into your house of worship now. That way, you'll all be comfortable should this need arise.

## KEEP HANDS BUSY

Having something to do with your hands was a huge help. We used scratch-off paper angels for the kids to respond and wonder after the Advent II Gospel that first Sunday. They scratched in silence and with conversation. We used art and action to express our thoughts, feelings and prayers over time. We did a prayer-weaving activity, had sand to trace prayers in, made finger paintings, signed banners for other communities, made care cards, created lighthouses, made sandwiches, painted murals and more.

*For you yourselves know very well that the day of the LORD will come like a thief in the night. When they say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our LORD Jesus Christ,*

— 1 Thessalonians 5:2-9

## Conversations with Children

### GATHER FOR CONVERSATION

Gather together to allow sharing. Be available to talk to kids. Sharing can be very healing for everyone. Silence can make children feel isolated and may convey the message that they should limit their grieving. Like adults, children grieve at their own pace — respect where they are in that process.

### LISTEN

Don't force children to share or talk; let it come naturally. During the children's liturgy on the Sunday two days after our shooting, a 6-year-old child raised his hand during the prayers of the young people and said, "My friends and principal were killed. They died." So, I told that child how it made me sad and how it made God sad. We talked about how God sends angels to give us important messages like, "Do not be afraid." We talked about how prayer helps us not to feel afraid. And we prayed for that child's friends and teachers. We prayed for our families and community. We prayed for our first responders. We prayed and prayed. Then we made hearts to give to the families and friends of those killed, hundreds and hundreds of paper hearts (cut out by volunteers who wanted to help).

### STAY CALM

Be supportive and sympathetic, but avoid overreacting. Don't try to make it okay; let them express fears, thoughts, and worries. Give honest information about the tragedy and deaths based on the child's maturity level. Always be truthful: "I'm sad, too." Avoid euphemisms with children.

### OFFER SEPARATE SPACE, IF NEEDED

Parents were worried about sending their children, who weren't at Sandy Hook School (Newtown has four elementary schools), to Sunday School class because they thought the Sandy Hook kids might share too much, exposing the innocent to too much information that might be disturbing. So, we had a place for the Sandy Hook kids to talk quietly when they needed to do so rather than share with the whole class. But we also reminded parents that their children will hear things — on the bus, at soccer, etc., and talking about it with a trusted adult in the room is a better way for their child to process. God understands hard things. Jesus cried.

It's okay to say that you don't have all the answers: validate thoughtful questioning.

## Supporting Older Children & Teens

Older children are drawn together in situations of tragedy and will draw strength and support from each other. Give the teens choices about what they want and need. Our teens found solace in taking action and helping others. Foundation fundraisers, work camps, service trips and community service all continued to be important parts of our healing.

Ben's Lighthouse was founded in memory of Trinity parishioner Ben Wheeler. "Helping is healing" was the motto for those first few years, along with "Stand tall, shine bright." I led and chaperoned several youth trips for Ben's Lighthouse across the country. Our teens were shining examples of the light in the darkness. Now, those young Sandy Hook student survivors continue to light the way as teens and young adults.

Advice for something like this is hard to give. I have a long list of Bible verses, song lyrics and quotes about the light in the darkness. Focusing on the light in a dark place was and is where I draw my strength. Have that list ready. I hope and pray you don't need it.



*The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego, in partnership with Episcopal Relief & Development, provided emergency grants for supplies and home goods in response to the flooding in the area.*

## Creating Empowered Faith Communities to Act in the Event of a Disaster

### A Church-Eye View of Disaster Relief & Response

It's Monday morning.

Your community experienced a massive, sudden flood yesterday evening when a dam burst after heavy rains.

Media reports indicate that many homes and businesses were severely damaged. There have been some deaths and many injuries. People are still being evacuated. Many people are suddenly homeless.

Your church is on relatively high ground. The rector lives next door. Electricity is out, and water isn't running. Surrounding roads are impassable.

Your disaster team members have cell phone service and are ready to respond.

Are you?

The faith communities most effective in responding after a disaster are those that have a firm sense of their mission in the community, have taken stock of their human and physical assets and have a sense of how to mobilize them to address the changing constellation of needs that occur in disaster recovery.

Episcopal Relief & Development offers a free resource to help you do that. It's called "The Disaster Timeline: A Church-Eye View." This simulation exercise introduces church members to the various ways a disaster can impact a community and the role a congregation can play in helping people recover. It walks you from the onset of a disaster to the development of a new normal for your community. The entire program can be found [here](#).

It features two sessions that can be done separately or back-to-back, with a variety of church-based groups, such as vestries, youth groups, outreach committees and faith formation programs:

1. **Creating a Disaster Preparedness Plan (60-90 minutes):** This exercise invites small groups to create a mini-parish disaster plan that inventories their congregation's particular human and physical assets and considers how they might be mobilized in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.
2. **The Disaster Timeline (3 hours):** This exercise introduces the various phases of disaster recovery and invites participants to use their work from the first exercise to examine how their congregation can respond on the road to recovery. It also introduces the **Emotional Life Cycle of a Disaster**, which we explain below. It can be found [here](#).

**Localize This:** If a flood scenario is unlikely in your community, feel free to adapt this exercise with a disaster that is more likely to occur. However, avoid using the most recent disaster your community may have experienced. Too often, disaster planning rehearses the last disaster but fails to prepare for other potential crises, such as weather events, fires, shootings and political uprisings.

## Creating a Disaster Preparedness Plan – An Example of the Basics

*From the resource “The Disaster Timeline: A Church-Eye View.”*

Our research on the phases of a disaster informs this action plan example:

**RESCUE:** The dam has burst, and the flooding is actively happening. People are being evacuated, and roads are impassable.

**The disaster team members all have cell phone service.** *Check in and begin mobilization plans.*

**RELIEF:** Two days have passed. The roads are passable, and people can access the church buildings. Electricity is on at the church, though it is still out in many parts of the area. The church buildings also have running water. News reports indicate that people are without electricity, gas and water. They can’t charge phones, get hot meals, take a hot shower, do laundry or clean their flood-damaged items.

**The Disaster Committee is meeting and exploring these questions:**

- In addition to those we know of, how do we determine the additional needs in our congregation and community?
- Based on the response assets we have already identified, what will we deploy to respond to these needs?

**RECOVERY:** It’s about three weeks after the disaster. Your team is meeting again to assess the church’s response and to anticipate next steps.

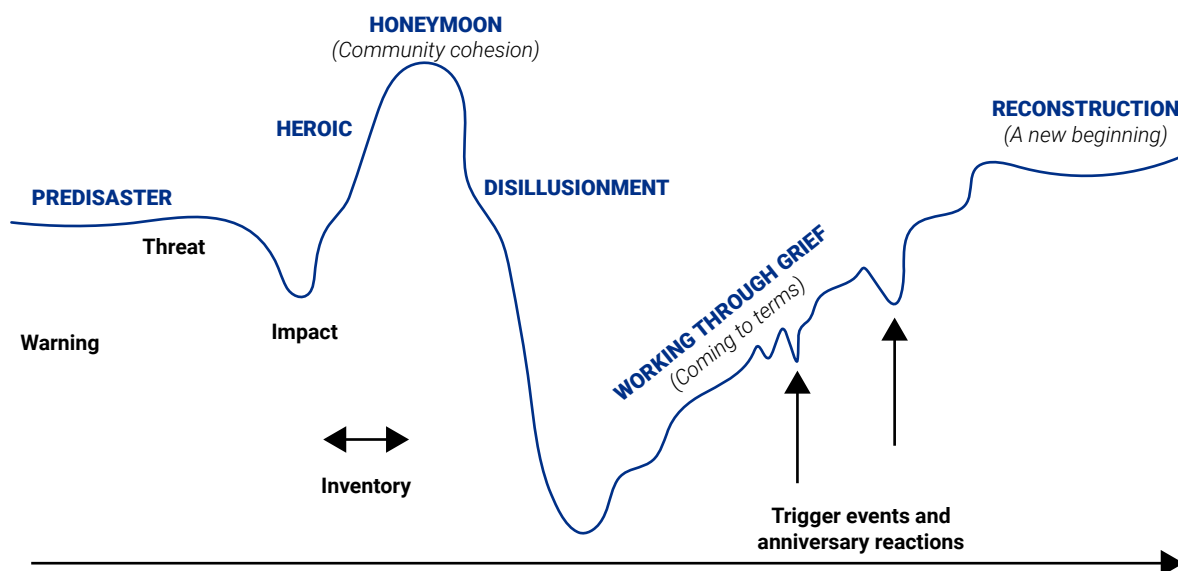
**Your team meets to ask the questions again as the situation evolves:**

- In addition to those we know, how do we determine the additional needs in our congregation and community?
- Based on the response assets we have already identified, what will we deploy to respond to these needs?

**LONG-TERM RECOVERY:** Three months have passed. You can tell that many people are tired of the stress and just want to move on. People in the hardest-hit parts of town are still in temporary housing. Families whose parents had to miss work are struggling financially to catch up. Families without a financial cushion are unable to pay bills, etc. Some people are having trouble with insurance companies. Some are on public assistance for the first time. Financial donations are waning, and the disaster is no longer in the national media.

**Your committee meets to evaluate what you've been doing and what you should be working on now.  
Your team meets to ask the questions again as the situation evolves:**

- In addition to those we know, how do we determine the additional needs in our congregation and community?
- Based on the response assets we have already identified, what will we deploy to respond to these needs?



## UNDERSTANDING THE DIAGRAM

*Written by the Rev. Canon Carl Andrews and Archdeacon Russ Oechsel*

Disasters take an emotional toll on each person to varying degrees, whether directly or indirectly affected. The journey is not always linear, and in fact, often, phases of the emotional life cycle of a disaster repeat or last longer than one might originally think. Immediately after the impact of an event, there are heroic efforts (rescues, etc.) during a period called the honeymoon phase. This is also a time of community cohesion. Normally, following this period, there is an emotional crash characterized by disillusionment and perhaps a feeling of abandonment. From that low place, one starts working through the grief, coupled with the difficulties of applying for benefits, filing insurance claims, etc.

When there are anniversaries or trigger events, such as a new storm, negative emotions return, often accompanied by another wave of hopelessness. The length of the cycle can take up to five years or more. Keep in mind the psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) as this grief period superimposes itself onto the disillusionment stage as well. People may return to their low place for a time, then start climbing again to the new normal, defined as reconstruction, or a new beginning.



In the elongated emotional life cycle of a disaster, most appropriately associated with events such as pandemics, the honeymoon stage will peak earlier with some community cohesion or joint confusion caused by misunderstanding the pandemic or misinformation. The period of disillusionment and the time spent working through the grief stage become elongated. It can take months or longer, depending on the availability of treatments or vaccines, the ability to contain the spread and the mortality rate. The grief stage will likely be longer, with more depression and anger than with natural disasters. It could take 20-25 years to reach the reconstruction stage after a pandemic. An electronic version of this resource can be found on our website [here](#).



*Demonstration of the resilient gardening techniques to have a good harvest in Sri Lanka, supported by the Anglican Diocese of Colombo and Episcopal Relief & Development.*

## 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](#).



# Outreach & Creative Community Engagement

When destabilizing events like pandemics, damaging weather, gun violence or fires strike our communities, our role in responding as churches, dioceses and compassionate Christians is to:

- Combat fear with knowledge in order to encourage preparedness and decrease stigma
- Maintain operational continuity and continue worship life in the case of potential quarantine and disruption
- Show God's compassion and care to those in our communities who are affected

Now is the time for communities and individuals of faith to take the lead and make readiness and resilience for all persons a part of our mission for healing the world.

## **In this section, you will find:**

- » *What We Do – Episcopal Relief & Development's Strategy for Disaster Relief & Response*
- » *What You Can Do – How You Can Join Other Faith Leaders & Communities in Making a Difference*
- » *Building Community with ABCD Engagement – A Worksheet for You!*
- » *Helpful Preparedness Checklists for Every Household*
- » *Make a Disaster Kit for Someone Else*
- » *Become a Ministry Partner with Episcopal Relief & Development*

## **EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT**

The UN Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR 2024) examines present and future trends and shows how forensic analysis can enable more targeted and effective risk reduction. If we accept that disasters are neither natural nor inevitable, then we must work to prevent or at least reduce their impact. Read the full report [here](#).

## **THE EPISCOPAL ASSET MAP**

*Let seekers and others in the community know what you are doing to build up disaster resilience and recovery. Find faith communities with whom to share resources and ministry outreach initiatives.*

The Episcopal Asset Map is located [here](#). Check your listing. If you notice something is missing or needs updating, simply click on the survey in the right-hand column and make your suggested changes. They will be forwarded to your Diocesan Map Administrator for approval and then updated!

## What We Do – Episcopal Relief & Development's Strategy for Disaster Relief & Response

Episcopal Relief & Development partners with faith and community leaders before, during and after disasters to advance lasting change in communities affected by injustice, poverty, disaster and climate change.

**Before:** Our research-driven programs enable communities to be better prepared when disaster hits.

**During:** We are here for you and those affected by disasters, helping discern assets, working with other local agencies to coordinate response and fundraising and identifying areas where support is immediately needed.

**After:** Supporting the relief and recovery efforts of any community following a disaster takes a long time. We continue to build connections between local church and faith community leaders, ministry partners, bishops and provinces to help realize recovery and revitalization following a disaster event.

Most disasters have three distinct, sometimes overlapping phases: rescue, relief and recovery. Understanding each phase guides our choices about response and recovery efforts and will also help you give the right support at the right time.

1. **The Rescue Phase** is typically up to two weeks long, and the focus is on saving lives and securing property. This work is generally done by the police, fire departments and other government agencies. These groups have equipment that can clear roads and debris and restore power. They also maintain specialized systems for mass distribution and storage.
2. **The Relief Phase** follows, typically lasting up to a few months. Depending on the scale of the disaster, during this phase, we partner with local churches, reaching out to those in need of assistance and helping them assess what needs to be done. We then help Faith Leaders coordinate with a number of other organizations, securing the resources necessary for the long-term recovery phase.
3. **The Recovery Phase.** During recovery, the emphasis shifts to repairing houses and buildings and returning survivors to self-sufficiency. Finally, out-of-town volunteers are often welcomed, and the community knows what kinds of items they need and can receive. The challenge of the recovery phase is that most television cameras have moved on, but the human suffering has grown. The church excels in this phase because we are part of the communities that have been impacted, and the relationships we've built even before a disaster remain in place for the years it will take to reach a new normal.

Inspired by our faith and in collaboration with local experts, we provide resources and programming that focus on shared learning and ensure our support is purpose-driven, compassionate, effective and respectful of the dignity of all human beings. Together, we strengthen local leadership and global connections.

We define measurable objectives for each program and establish key data points to track. With that information, we monitor and assess program effectiveness. We share results with our partners to evaluate success and identify areas for improvement. Holding ourselves to these standards has allowed us to provide effective care to more than 49 million people in the last 10 years, even in highly challenging contexts.



## What You Can Do – How You Can Join Other Faith Leaders & Communities in Making a Difference

What can you do during the first few days after a disaster?

When we see images of people suffering, we want to do something. However, sometimes outside help complicates a response. Here are some ways you can be helpful while you watch from afar and wait until the time is right to help.

**Pray.** Continue to hold those directly impacted by a disaster in your hearts throughout every phase of a disaster. Say a prayer for first responders, survivors and all those involved in providing relief. This is a great way to put your faith into action and release your anxious thoughts. Prayers for times of disaster can be found on our [website](#).

**Refrain from Sending Supplies.** In disasters that cause severe damage, communities might need items or volunteers to assist in rebuilding, but sometimes not right away. Please refrain from sending supplies and clothes or self-deploying to the affected area until a request is made. Read more at the FEMA disaster volunteer and donation [website](#).

**Make a Financial Contribution.** Monetary donations in the early stages of a disaster give affected communities more agency and flexibility and boost the local economy. Contributing to Episcopal Relief & Development makes helping in times of disaster easy; we work with impacted communities to assess what's needed and when. Donate today by clicking [this link](#) and selecting the area of relief you would like to support financially.

**Prepare for a Disaster in Your Area.** This is such an important and often overlooked way to serve. Helping your community with preparedness reduces the impact of many disasters. While the news is focused on a major event, always remember that disasters can happen anywhere at any time. Familiarize yourself with the disaster risks that exist in your community. Once you do, make a plan.

**Stay Informed.** To get a monthly update about how Episcopal Relief & Development is engaged in current disasters and how you can support this work, subscribe to our electronic newsletter, Lamplight, by clicking [here](#) and entering your email address. The newsletter contains preparedness tips, success stories and other information about how you can continue to partner with us for lasting change.

*“We cannot prevent disasters, nor can we remove all threats and hazards from our lives. But we can increase our resilience to them – our capacity to absorb, mitigate, adjust to and recover from adverse events and circumstances.”*

– Dr. Janice Proud, Anglican Alliance Disaster Response and Resilience Manager

## Building Community with ABCD Engagement – A Worksheet for You!

Episcopal Relief & Development successfully implements ABCD engagement across all of our priorities. This includes being intentional about cultivating not just the people in the work but also the essential work of connecting groups and agencies and building strong and long-lasting networks for change.

Individually, or with your team, use this worksheet to brainstorm the many assets in and around your faith community. Prepare to be surprised, to need to add lots more space in each column and to be inspired to start making connections right away.

Here are questions to consider as you fill this out:

- Who are the people in our faith community? How are they connected to each other and our neighborhood?
- What are they passionate about?
- Are there artists, teachers, workers, listeners, dreamers?
- Do they represent a variety of cultures?
- What is the ecology of our space? Do we have a field? Meeting rooms? Gathering spaces? A rain or vegetable garden? A scary/cool bell tower or undercroft for exploring during a fellowship event?
- How frequent and welcoming are our community prayer and worship observances, and do we directly invite neighbors to participate?

Human – people and their skills, knowledge, experiences, personalities, ideas	Natural – land, water, forests, wildlife, sun	Physical – fixed, structural, or man-made, buildings, homes, churches	Social – relationships, friendships, networks, traditions, cultures
Economic – cash, capital, savings, wages, pensions	Temporal – time, daylight, seasons, age	Spiritual – faith, hope and love, prayer, worship	

## Helpful Preparedness Checklists for Every Household

When we are prepared, we are in a better position to help our neighbors after a disaster. Follow these steps to make a plan for disasters and put together an emergency kit. Do not worry if you are not able to do all of the suggested activities all at once! Even having a few extra items will make a big difference in improving your safety and comfort in the event of a disaster.

### THINGS TO DO

- ☐ Make copies of important papers, such as birth certificates, IDs, insurance policies, passports, online passwords, leases or deeds, etc.

Try not to store your username, passwords and websites in the same location. Remember to update this list as you change your passwords.

You should keep hard copies in a secure location and save digital scans on a flash drive. Store copies of these documents in your emergency kit so that you can easily access them if you need to evacuate quickly.

- ☐ Create a list of your family and friends' current cell and landline numbers and emails and print it out. This information will be useful if you cannot access the contact list on your computer or phone. Be sure to include at least one out-of-state contact; this person may be easier to connect with than a local contact after a disaster.

Keep a copy in your home and in your wallet or purse so that you will always have your loved ones' contact information with you. Try adding birthdays and other important dates to your contacts list. That way you will be in the habit of regularly checking and updating your list.

- ☐ Know how to shut off the water, power and gas in your home. After a disaster, being able to turn off these utilities can help ensure your safety and reduce the risk of further damage to your home.
- ☐ Back up your computer files on cloud storage and/or external hard drive. Save all files that are important to you.
- ☐ Have a conversation with your family members about what you would do if a disaster happens when you are all at home.
- ☐ Make copies of your credit card numbers, including customer service numbers, and store with other important documents. It will be easier to replace lost or stolen cards if you have this information on hand.

### A SEASON OF RESILIENCE

*This checklist was adapted from the [A Season of Resilience](#) five-week worship activity. Please visit the document to print out the information in the form of worship inserts.*

### PRAYER FOR TIMES OF DISASTER

*by The Rev. Lyndon Harris*

*O God, Our times are in your hand. In the midst of uncertainty, lead us by your never-failing grace as we seek to be agents of healing and hope. Walk with us through difficult times; watch over us in danger, and give to us a spirit of love and compassion for those who suffer and mourn. And finally, remind us that you have promised never to leave us so that even in the valley of the shadow of death your love may be felt, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

- ☐ Memorize an emergency contact phone number (or two). This will come in handy if your cell phone is ever broken, missing or stolen.

- ☐ Have a conversation with your family members about what you would do if a disaster happens during when you are separated. Identify a meet-up point and develop a communications plan.

During your conversation, be sure to talk through your feelings. How would you feel? What would be most difficult? What will you want to do (often our impulse is to immediately contact a partner, kids, parents)? What should you do?

- ☐ Conduct a disaster drill with your loved ones. Practice connecting with each other and getting to the appropriate location. Make any changes necessary to your plan.

#### **PREPARE A KIT**

- ☐ A large waterproof container or a bag to store your emergency kit items
- ☐ Copies of important papers — you can keep paper copies or store them on a flash drive
- ☐ Contact information — the list should include phone numbers and emails of your family and friends, including one out-of-state contact
- ☐ Cash in different denominations — shoot for \$100 total or as much as you can; try saving a couple dollars each week this season
- ☐ Spare set of keys for your house
- ☐ A map of your area and any known evacuation routes
- ☐ 3 gallons of water — include some in gallon jugs and some in smaller bottles
- ☐ 3 cans of food you would like to eat such as beans, meat, fish, pasta or soup that would taste good cold
- ☐ 1 can of fruit or veggies
- ☐ Lots of tasty snacks, such as dried fruit, nuts, seeds, crackers, granola bars, wasabi peas, and peanut butter
- ☐ A beverage that you would like to drink such as juice, a sports drink or electrolyte solution
- ☐ Comfort food such as candy or chips; be sure your chocolate has a candy coating so that it doesn't melt!

- ☐ Eating utensils
- ☐ Manual can opener
- ☐ A week's supply of medication and vitamins
- ☐ Health items — first aid kit, thermometer, allergy and pain medication, menstrual supplies, gloves, hand sanitizer, sapre glasses or contacts
- ☐ Toiletries — may include comb, soap, shampoo, deodorant, washcloth or a small towel
- ☐ 1 roll of toilet paper
- ☐ Cell phone charger
- ☐ Basic tools — screwdriver, utility knife, pliers and duct tap
- ☐ Pen, marker and notebook
- ☐ Disinfecting wipes
- ☐ Whistle
- ☐ Flashlight with an extra set of batteries
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Change of clothes
- ☐ Reusable water bottle
- ☐ Matches
- ☐ Mylar emergency blanket or regular blanket
- ☐ Tissues or paper towels
- ☐ Special needs: Take some time to think about any additional items you might need. Do you need to include items for pets, infants, children and seniors? Diapers, pet food and extra batteries for hearing aids may easily be forgotten.
- ☐ Climate specific: Include items liek bug spray, sunscreen, rain gear or cold weather gear as needed.
- ☐ Spiritual resources: Disasters can be incredible stressful. include a couple of small items in your kit to help you feel more calm and centered, such as a Bible, an icon, photo, book of poetry or a copy of a special prayer.
- ☐ Entertainment: These could include reading material, brainteasers, playing cards, yarn and knitting needles.

### EXTRA CREDIT ITEMS

*These are items that go above and beyond a standard emergency kit, but you may choose to include: a solar-powered cellphone charger, work gloves, rope, plastic sheeting and plastic bags.*

## Make a Disaster Kit for Someone Else

When we are prepared, we are in a better position to help our neighbors after a disaster. Churches, families and individuals are encouraged to do their best to have supplies on hand that will come in handy during evacuation or while sheltering-in-place. Below is a list of items to gather for your neighbors and friends in need ahead of a disaster. Please remember to ask about allergies and cultural preferences.

- ☐ Reusable water bottle
- ☐ Snack bar
- ☐ Chips and other snacks
- ☐ Pen, marker and notebook
- ☐ 1 roll of toilet paper
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Flashlight and batteries
- ☐ Menstrual supplies
- ☐ Hand sanitizer
- ☐ Face mask
- ☐ Canned fruits and vegetables
- ☐ Socks
- ☐ Disinfecting wipes
- ☐ Basic tools
- ☐ Whistle
- ☐ Eating utensils
- ☐ Manual can opener
- ☐ A book
- ☐ Bug spray and/or sunscreen
- ☐ A prayer card
- ☐ Toiletries
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Electrolyte drink or other juice

### A SEASON OF RESILIENCE

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## Becoming a Ministry Partner with Episcopal Relief & Development

Maybe you are called to be a Ministry Partner. Ask yourself:

- Are you moved to connect your community to the wider world, showing how your community can be a beacon of God's love in neighborhoods near and far?
- Do you want to help ensure that women around the world live lives free from violence and are treated with dignity and respect?
- Are you interested in breaking cycles of poverty and dependence by partnering with people worldwide as they transform their own lives and communities in sustainable and life-giving ways?
- Do you want to promote healthy development for children under age six so that they can reach their full potential?
- Are you moved to support the most vulnerable communities that are disproportionately impacted by disasters?

If you answered "Yes" to these questions, then you have the makings of a Ministry Partner!

### What Do Ministry Partners Do?

Ministry Partners answer the call to minister to their congregations, dioceses, provinces, seminaries and other faith communities, helping them be part of working together for lasting change.

They do this through:

- Learning about Episcopal Relief & Development's programs
- Raising awareness about Episcopal Relief & Development in their congregations, dioceses and across The Episcopal Church
- Encouraging and supporting fundraising and awareness campaigns
- Receiving support from Episcopal Relief & Development's staff and network of volunteers

Congregational, Diocesan, Provincial, and Seminary Ministry Partner roles are available.

### How Do I Become a Ministry Partner?

Send an email to [engagement@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:engagement@episcopalrelief.org). Include your name, congregation, congregation city and diocese. The Engagement team is ready to answer your questions and help you start your ministry!



# Fun & Fundraising with Episcopal Relief & Development

*“Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission.”*

— Henri Nouwen, Dutch priest and theologian

Thanks to leaders like you and faith communities across the church, awareness about the importance of our work on disaster response and recovery continues to grow. With your financial support, we can expand our capacity to make lasting changes in how we help communities build resilience.

Episcopal Relief & Development knows that people impacted by natural disasters or human-made crises like conflict need immediate relief and communities need long-term investment. Our approach is inclusive, comprehensive and forward-looking, building on a community's existing strengths, assets and resources. At the same time, we help communities prepare for the future. We take the time to understand a community's existing strengths, assets and resources. We share our expertise in disaster preparedness and resilience. With our partners and local leaders, we design programs that help communities make a full and sustained recovery.

With your financial support, we can expand our capacity to make lasting changes in how we care for those impacted by natural and human-made disasters.

We've gathered everything you need to plan and carry out meaningful fundraising experiences: ideas for events and outreach; tips for engaging individuals, your congregation or community; and ways to share powerful stories of hope and transformation. Using these materials, you will:

## LEARN

Learn about how the work and methodology of Episcopal Relief & Development helps to strengthen communities around the world.

## SHARE

Share about the work of Episcopal Relief & Development with congregations and communities.

## GIVE

Give a gift of your time, talent, or treasure to help nurture communities to their full potential.

Your generosity expands the reach of our collective impact and brings us one step closer to a more just and resilient world.

Let's get started — working together for lasting change!

### **In this section you will find:**

- » *Get Creative with Gifts for Life*
- » *How to Plan a Churchwide or Diocesan Campaign*
- » *Helpful Tips for a Successful Campaign*
- » *How to Plan an Individual or Team Fundraising Online Campaign*
- » *Fundraising with Special Fellowship & Worship Activities*
  - » *Hosting an Alternative Gift Market*
  - » *Dedicated Special Offerings*
- » *Opportunities for Local & Diocesan Grants and Individual Support*
- » *Individual Giving Opportunities*

### **Our Pledge to Donors**

Episcopal Relief & Development is committed to using all donations appropriately and effectively to serve and support people in need worldwide. In addition to maintaining the highest standards for internal accountability, we are involved in multi-agency efforts to improve practices and reporting within the relief and development community. We are committed to accountability and making sure your gifts are used effectively.

Episcopal Relief & Development is grateful to receive support from many congregations and individuals across The Episcopal Church and other faith groups. We can only carry out our transformative programs thanks to everyone's compassionate and sustained giving.

## Get Creative with *Gifts for Life*

Here are some fun ideas for fellowship, and other ways the communities you serve as a Ministry Partner can support our [Gifts for Life](#) program:

- Organize a **read-a-thon**, **dance-a-thon** or **walk-a-thon**. Collect pledges from family and friends for each mile or hour of your activity.
- Organize a weekend **car wash** and use the proceeds to purchase *Gifts for Life*.
- Arrange a **silent auction** for your church and community members. Ask members of your congregation to donate items for the auction.
- Have your adult or children's Sunday school class host and make an inexpensive **dinner** with an admission charge. Decide together what *Gifts for Life* selections to purchase with the proceeds.
- Encourage your children to **write letters** to family members, friends, classmates and club or team members to raise money to purchase a special gift. Have them mention that the gift will make a difference for children in need.
- Sponsor a church or neighborhood **garage sale**. Gather gently used books, crafts, clothes and household goods to sell, and use the money you raise to purchase items from the *Gifts for Life* catalog.
- Hold a **wine-tasting** event and use the proceeds to purchase clean water or other basic needs for a family or community.
- Instead of going out to dinner with friends, hold a **potluck** and put the money saved into a basket. Then, go through the *Gifts for Life* catalog as a group and choose items based on the amount collected.
- Hold a **game night** and ask people to donate to participate. The group can then decide together what gifts to purchase with the collected funds.
- **"Get the Warden's Goat"**: Raise enough money to buy a goat in honor of your church's warden. In the same way, you can "get the priest's goat," the treasurer's, the auditor's or whomever you choose.
- **Another fun idea**: The next time you visit with your partners in the communities you serve, spend a little time telling them about additional and varied ways they can engage our *Gifts for Life* opportunity for gift giving. Instead of holding a regular family, office or group gift exchange, ask them to consider pooling funds that would have been spent and choose [Gifts for Life](#) as a group, or give gifts to everyone based on their various interests. For example:
  - \* For your child's teacher: [Nurture & Nourish the Earliest Learners](#) or [Educate Children Orphaned by AIDS](#)
  - \* For new parents or grandparents: [Care for Moms & Newborns](#)
  - \* For an avid gardener: [Seeds, Tools & Training](#), [Fruit Trees](#) or a [Family Garden](#)

- \* For a farmer: a [Cow, Pig](#) or a [Flock of Chickens](#)
- \* For someone in health care: [Emergency Food Relief](#) or [Disaster Relief Kit](#)
- \* In honor of a baptism: [Clean Water](#)
- \* For campers: [Mosquito Nets](#)
- \* For a banker, accountant or church treasurer: [Micro-credit Loans for Women](#)

Adapted from a resource created by Barb Hagan, former Ministry Partner of the Episcopal Diocese of Montana. Find out how you can become a Ministry Partner by emailing us at [engagement@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:engagement@episcopalrelief.org).

## How to Plan a Churchwide or Diocesan Campaign

Here are some simple steps to get you started on a successful fundraising campaign for Episcopal Relief & Development.

### **STEP 1: Assess Interest and Capacity in a Campaign**

- Begin conversations about a fundraising campaign.
- Discover if there is energy and excitement for one of Episcopal Relief & Development's priority areas: Early Childhood Development, Women & Girls, Climate Resilience and Disaster Response.
- Talk to members of your congregation, your rector and your deacons.

### **STEP 2: Develop and Discuss a Plan**

- Goal: Will there be a total fundraising goal?
- Timing: Set the duration for one day, one month or a timeline that works for your team.
- Launch: Discuss when to launch and announce the campaign to your community.

### **STEP 3: Pre-Launch Preparation or Campaign Planning**

- Prepare for the launch.
- Ensure the rector will share announcements about the campaign.
- Determine who will speak for the group.
- Develop a presentation on your effort.
- Utilize the resources and toolkits on our [website](#) to generate ideas for your campaign.

### **STEP 4: Announce the Campaign**

- Present an overview of Episcopal Relief & Development
- Share your local campaign fundraising goal (if you have one), proposed timeline and ways people can get involved.
- Ask the church leadership to reinforce this message as well.
- Organize a campaign booth to provide resources to members and collect donations.

### **Step 5: Send Updates on Campaign**

- Keep members informed on campaign progress to maintain momentum.
- Use weekly announcement times to share your progress.
- Schedule emails or website updates for your community.
- Share stories and photos of your efforts on the website or weekly e-newsletters.

### **Step 6: Celebrate Success!**

- Announce the completion of the campaign, recognize leadership and thank everyone!
- Publish an article in your church bulletin and/or newsletter and the community newspaper.
- Inform us of your activities so we can share and celebrate your success!



## Helpful Tips for a Successful Campaign

### Your Role

- Re-introduce yourself to leadership where you serve as a Ministry Partner, including any updated contact information, especially if you are new to this role.  
Email us at [engagement@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:engagement@episcopalrelief.org) with any questions.
- Spread the word with your local bishop, clergy and church leadership to raise awareness about the Episcopal Relief & Development fundraising campaign.
- Share stories about the benefits of the campaign for your communities.
- Be a resource for information and material; see the website for toolkits and additional resources.
- Your successes, large and small, can build awareness and encourage creative and exciting fundraisers that engage and inspire your diocese, parish and community.

### Examples of Awareness-Building

- Share stories about how Episcopal Relief & Development's programs nurture early childhood development, reduce violence against women and girls, strengthen communities' climate resilience and provide support in the wake of disasters.
- Offer prayers in support of the work of Episcopal Relief & Development.
- Invite a speaker from Episcopal Relief & Development to join an adult forum or other meeting and speak about our work. Reach out to [engagement@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:engagement@episcopalrelief.org).

### Examples of Fundraising

- Organize bake sales, movie nights, Super Bowl parties or other activities to support the campaign — your imagination is the limit!
- Share the donation link via email and social media to suggest donations for birthdays and other occasions "in lieu of gifts."

### For More Information

- Explore our [Faith Formation and Educational Resources](#).
- Print resources, including Hope Chest, pew envelopes and brochures, can be ordered through Forward Movement. The resources are free at [forwardmovement.org/episcopalrelief.org](http://forwardmovement.org/episcopalrelief.org).

Be sure to share your stories with Episcopal Relief & Development. We will be highlighting the work of communities across the country. You can send updates to [engagement@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:engagement@episcopalrelief.org).

Questions? Send an email to: [engagement@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:engagement@episcopalrelief.org)

## Coming Soon: Individual or Team Fundraising Online Campaign

Online fundraising is an easy and effective way to raise money. Soon you will be able to raise money as an individual or create a team and ask others to join you. Our online fundraising platform is GoFundMe Pro (formerly called Classy). GoFundMe is the leader in online fundraising and has been in the business for many years. Their platform is easy to use, secure, and will launch on our website soon! Check back for updates.

It will include a step-by-step instruction guide to create your fundraising page on GoFundMe Pro.

You will also be able to create an online fundraiser specifically for one of our priority areas.

- Early Childhood Development
- Women and Girls
- Climate Resilience
- Disaster Response

### Suggestions for successful online fundraising:

**Personalize your page.** Make your page as personal as possible. Add pictures, customize your bio and talk about your experience with Episcopal Relief & Development. Tell your family and friends why they should help us work together for lasting change!

**Target goal.** Give yourself a target goal to hit that is realistic but also aggressive! There are impact donation levels for each campaign so your supporters can see the impact of their donations.

**Activate your network.** Use the tools available on your fundraising page to contact your network and ask for donations. Social media, email and phone calls are great ways to engage people you know. Let them know what you're doing and ask them for support. Make it clear that you need their help!

**Draft potential donor list.** Think of people that you can count on for their support – friends, family, neighbors and co-workers.

**Sharing.** Share your link on Facebook and Instagram or your other social media accounts. You can even create a video to summarize what you're doing.

**Ask, then follow up.** People want to support you, but everyone is busy and forgets. Follow up with your supporters and send updates to help remind them of your efforts. Personalize your requests.

**Thank them.** Be sure to personally thank your supporters, either by email, phone, eCards or in person. Your supporters want to know you appreciate them.

**Share your success!** Reach out to your family and friends when you reach campaign milestones. Halfway to your goal is a great time to share your campaign again.

**Birthdays and more.** Instead of asking for birthday and holiday gifts, ask for donations! Ask your family and friends to share your page with their networks. You will need help so the more people you connect with, the better.



*In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Edneyville, North Carolina, became a vital support hub. St. Paul's transformed its parish hall into a distribution center, providing food, clothing, personal care items and emergency supplies.*

*With support from Episcopal Relief & Development and the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina, St. Paul's partnered with local nonprofit Moms WNC to distribute supplies directly to families in need and offered critical assistance in areas where access and transportation were major challenges.*

## Fundraising with Fellowship & Worship Activities

Fundraising within a faith community goes beyond simply raising money; it is an opportunity to embody our values, come together with a shared purpose and create a meaningful impact in the world.

When we give, we put our faith into action, demonstrating compassion, generosity and love for our neighbors.

Supporting Episcopal Relief & Development through a special event such as an Alternative Gift Market, Dedicated Offering or Episcopal Relief & Development Sunday is a great way to bring your faith community together and provide people with an opportunity to connect more deeply with our mission.

All ages can participate in praying, “shopping” and giving for friends near and far. The more creative your team can be with these opportunities, the more engaging the learning and fellowship can be. Your Episcopal Relief & Development Ministry Partner can help!

### Alternative Gift Market

An [Alternative Gift Market](#) is a meaningful way to give a gift that inspires transformation.

It’s a festive event where members of your community can “shop” for goats, bees and all kinds of gifts that help people in need around the world. Purchasing gifts in honor of friends, family, colleagues and community helpers becomes a welcome alternative for gift exchanges.

Consider hosting the Market on its own or combined with a church picnic, outreach fair, holiday bazaar, at the end of a Vacation Bible School celebration or even at your annual meeting.

What better way to celebrate loved ones than with gifts that reflect our faith, compassion and hope for a better world?

Here are a few creative ideas and resources to get you started:

- [How to Hold an Alternative Gift Market](#)
- [Materials and Resources for the Alternative Gift Market](#)

## Dedicated Offering

Ask them to consider dedicating special community offerings to support the mission and ministry of Episcopal Relief & Development.

When disaster strikes, make certain your congregation knows about our prayers for inclusion in their worship leaflets and our bulletin [inserts](#) and encourage them to use these resources. You might also suggest they host a special outreach service or designate Pentecost Sunday as a way to celebrate the church's birthday with a gift to Episcopal Relief & Development. Other ideas include a special collection honoring a member of your community, thanking their teachers or staff or identifying parishioners who may choose to observe milestones like baptism, anniversaries or memorials with gifts to Episcopal Relief & Development.

Share with them the beautiful bulletin inserts, informational pamphlets and donation envelopes we provide, which help them share the good work of Episcopal Relief & Development and the opportunity to give. They are available for free from Forward Movement on their [website](#).

These resources are another easy way for them to educate and inspire generosity by highlighting the powerful, life-changing work their gifts make possible.

## Honor and Memorial Gifts – Gifts That Save Lives and Transform Communities

Looking for ways to celebrate or remember loved ones? Our Honor and Memorial Gift Program is another wonderful and easy way for individuals to commemorate significant milestones such as birthdays, holidays and anniversaries.

At your request, Episcopal Relief & Development will send a printed card to your honoree or the family of the memorial gift recipient indicating that a gift has been made in the individual's honor or memory. Attractive eCards are offered on our website as another option when you make your donation. More information can be found on our website [here](#).

## Opportunities for Local & Diocesan Grants and Individual Support

Whether you're interested in a seasonal focus, a year-long effort or a special initiative, our team is here to support you every step of the way.

Your Ministry Partner and Episcopal Relief & Development staff can provide planning guidance, promotional resources and fundraising tools to help you build a campaign that fits your community and inspires meaningful engagement.

### Does Your Faith Community Offer Grants?

If your faith community has a grant program or mission-giving fund, we invite you to consider Episcopal Relief & Development as a potential recipient.

Our programs can align with your mission as we work with local partners to nurture early childhood development, reduce violence against women and girls, strengthen communities' climate resilience, and provide support in the wake of disasters.

Simply email [engagement@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:engagement@episcopalrelief.org) to let us know how to access and submit an application and supporting materials. We would be honored to be part of your community's outreach and impact.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you.

### Plan a Diocesan Campaign with Us

Looking to make a broader impact?

Invite your diocese to partner with Episcopal Relief & Development by contributing from their funds and grants, or by launching a diocesan-wide campaign that brings people together in faith, generosity, and service.

As an Episcopal Relief & Development Ministry Partner, you have the tools you need to share our work's success stories and invite an entire diocesan community to join us. Together, we can strengthen connections across congregations and create lasting change in communities worldwide.

Ready to get started? Reach out to us at [engagement@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:engagement@episcopalrelief.org) to learn more.



## Individual Giving Opportunities

Your generosity enables us to unlock community transformation and support people affected by poverty, hunger, disaster injustice, poverty, disaster and climate change. We invite you to consider our giving opportunities and find out how you can play a part in our work worldwide.

All of the links below, with information about electronically contributing, can be found on our website [here](#).

Our donation process is easy to use, quick and secure:

- **Donate Now:** [Give](#) a gift that will help transform a community.
- **Sustainers Circle:** Become a sustainer of Episcopal Relief & Development's work and learn how you can [give monthly](#) to support our programs.
- **Planned Giving:** Your planned gifts can leave a lasting impact on people and communities around the world. [Learn more.](#)
- **Other Giving Opportunities:** Episcopal Relief & Development has several giving opportunities so supporters can contribute in a way that suits their individual needs. [Find the best option for you.](#)
- **Coming Soon: Individual Online Fundraising Campaigns:** Share the opportunity to make an act of love. Start an individual fundraising campaign and inspire others to LEARN, SHARE and GIVE to support the work of Episcopal Relief & Development.

Donations can also be made by mail.

Please mail checks and money order donations to our updated mailing address below. You may also indicate preferences for designated *Gifts for Life* or honorariums simply by printing out the forms and including them with your gift.

Episcopal Relief & Development  
PO Box 5121  
Boone, IA 50950 – 0121

**WE BELIEVE** our life-giving, loving, liberating God gives all, gathers all and draws all towards shared wholeness with one another and the concerns of those struggling with poverty, disaster and disease.

**WE BELIEVE** in faith's power to guide us in honoring the dignity of every human being and in building bridges between and beyond ourselves to the world.

**WE BELIEVE** bridges built with local presence and assets can transform individuals, communities and systems for better.

**WE BELIEVE** systemic change requires collaborative, just and reconciling leadership.

**WE BELIEVE** we are called to right the wrongs and sins of the past, even as we strive to repent of those sins and any we continue to commit.

**WE BELIEVE** the present state of the world does not fulfill the dream God intends for us.

**WE BELIEVE** in urgent, bold and inclusive humanitarian action that reaches the most vulnerable, builds toward tomorrow and fosters and spreads hope and healing.

**WE BELIEVE** in Working Together for Lasting Change.

**We ask God to bless this work.**



Thank you for using this *Restore & Renew – Responding & Rebuilding when Disaster Strikes* toolkit.

We hope it has made a difference in how your community understands their opportunity, through intentional disaster preparedness and prayers, to be ready to help when the need arises.

Please visit our website for additional toolkits from Episcopal Relief & Development that will guide your community to join us in making lasting change around our other priorities:

- *Joy & Wonder* – Faithfully Engaging Early Childhood Development
- *Grace, Justice & Hope* – for Women & Girls Everywhere
- *Nurture & Sustain* – Action-Based Climate Resilience

For over 80 years, Episcopal Relief & Development has worked with an extensive network of faith and community partners to advance lasting change in communities affected by injustice, poverty, disaster and climate change. Inspired by our faith, we reach over three million people each year by focusing on four interconnected priorities: nurturing the potential of caregivers and young children, reducing violence against women and girls, strengthening communities' resilience to climate change and facilitating humanitarian response to disasters. Together with our partners, we leverage what's working well to drive impact, learning and sustainability. Together, we create lasting change.

[www.episcopalrelief.org](http://www.episcopalrelief.org)