

proposed conference

Disaster Readiness & Response Ministry



INTRODUCTION

Oklahoma needs and deserves a ministry that is not based simply on trying to respond to disasters if, and when, they occur. It needs a proactive, congregationally-based and comprehensive ministry that keeps the local church focused on and prepared for such ministry throughout the year, whether a disaster occurs or not.

Taking as a model the role of a volunteer firefighter, the local church needs to be kept in constant readiness for disasters through on-going training, constant equipment readiness checks, and a relationship with the community that provides a service beyond mere disaster call-outs. But, when the call comes, the response is determined by the timetable and needs of the disaster and not that of the volunteers.

This proposal is presented now for noting and also for discussion throughout the next year. We invite Conference members and congregations to submit comments and suggestions to the OKVIM office which will be accepted until December 31, 2011. At that time we will take the information received into consideration as we construct a refined document to be formally presented for adoption by the Annual Conference of 2012.

In order to meet the goal of a properly prepared and effective response ministry, we propose to develop the ministry along the lines of the diagram on the next page. This will ensure we see beyond an actual occurring disaster to what is needed in preparation for any such disaster, as well as continued, helpful service after a disaster.

Volunteers In Mission

1501 N.W. 24th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73106-3635
www.okvim.org

PARTNERSHIP

The same interconnectedness and dependency we see in our own Disaster Ministry plan is also very true in the bigger picture of the Disaster Response community. Our decision to be committed to a Disaster Ministry is also a commitment to a part of a larger emergency response process. We don't serve alone or in a vacuum. In this big process, we partner with other responding organizations and agencies to get resources where they are needed most as we



strive to leverage those resources and avoid duplication. This is all in an effort to avoid overwhelming a community causing more harm than good. We partner together to provide training and resources and to share information. We partner with local, county and state

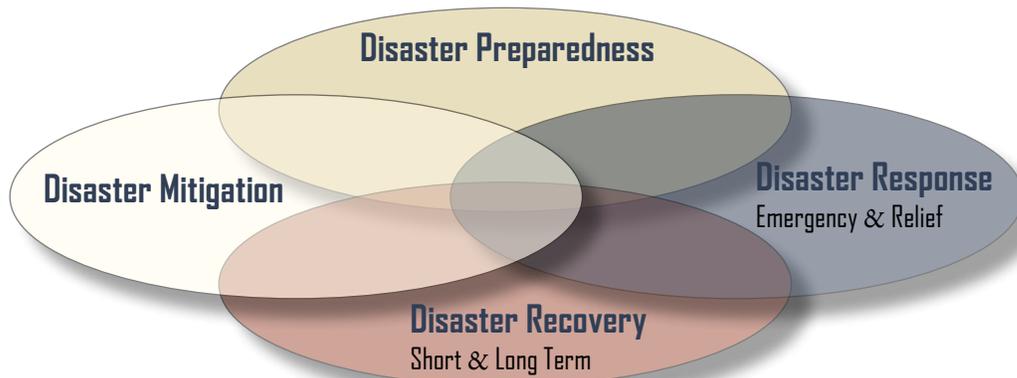
emergency management, FEMA and other governmental and non-governmental agencies as we serve our local communities in need. The key organization that enables this process is the **Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)**. This partnership allows many organizations to come together in mutual Cooperation, Communication, Coordination and Collaboration, as they help the victims of disaster piece their lives back to a "new normal." **The United**

Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is often times the face of our Church's disaster response efforts, but UMCOR has a vital partner and that is the body of thousands of volunteers from United Methodists **Volunteers In Mission**.

EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING

The story is the same every year. The best time to prepare for this year's storm season was LAST YEAR. This is a hard lesson many families, churches, and communities wish they had heeded before a disaster strikes. It is our prayer that we will all learn from the lessons others have had to learn the hard way. We pray we will take this ministry seriously and will do the hard work in preparing and readying ourselves, our families, our churches and our communities.

We want the Oklahoma United Methodist Church to develop a Disaster Ministry which is an asset to this bigger disaster community and one that is a true blessing to those whose lives have been turned upside down by a disaster. That will take proper preparation through **education, leadership, and training** in a methodical and rational process, which will take time and ongoing dedication.



THE DISASTER READINESS AND RESPONSE CYCLE

Disaster Preparedness Ministry

We first commit to developing and implementing education and establishing leadership. These two key elements will lead us to educated and well defined decisions regarding the other areas. Without this first step we will continue to have people wanting to serve, but they will not know how or where to serve effectively.

The potential areas of education and leadership are:

- a. Basic Disaster Ministry Education
- b. Family, Local Church, & District Disaster Plan Education (Connecting Neighbors)
- c. Disaster Ministry Leadership Education (Local Church Disaster Ministry Coordinator(s), District Disaster Ministry Coordinator(s), Annual Conference Leadership Education, etc.)
- d. Local Communities Disaster Education and Leadership
- e. Other Group and/or Online Basic & Advanced Disaster Preparedness Education & Leadership

Disaster Response Ministry

The fruit of our efforts in the **Preparedness** step will reap people who can discern their gifts and abilities to be able to define the area of the Disaster Response, Recovery & Mitigation Ministry to which God is calling them.

The current potential areas of participation (either as a leaders and a member) in disaster response are:

- a. Assessment & Communications Team
- b. Volunteer Coordination Team
- c. Early Response Team
- d. Response Team
- e. Care Team Ministry
- f. Other response efforts which effectively prepare us to respond in service to the bigger disaster community. This could include specialized education and trainings such as: Chainsaw, CPR, Ham Radio, Weather, Area Trainers, Construction, etc.

Each of the areas above will begin with a specific training to prepare us for a proper and responsible response. The next step in developing an effective ministry is establishing leadership in each area of response and that will be a key goal of these trainings.

Disaster Recovery Ministry

This is the area in which the bigger disaster community has depended on the United Methodist Church to be involved in for many years. United Methodists have effectively taken the leadership role in many disaster recovery efforts. Our planning efforts need to emphasize continued usefulness at this level.

The potential areas of participation in disaster recovery are:

- a. Long Term Recovery Committees
- b. Case Management (Supervisor and/or Case Management Workers)
- c. Disaster Volunteer Coordination & Management
- d. Mission Site Teams
- e. VIM Teams

Disaster Mitigation Ministry

This is the area of our disaster ministry in which we strive to be involved in activities that eliminate or reduce the chance of reoccurrence or the effects of a disaster. This might mean raising structures, purchasing flood insurance, preparing a disaster supply kit, etc. Many times disasters have the heaviest impact on the poor, the elderly and the disadvantaged. The area of Disaster Mitigation can overlap and connect with the Advocacy and Social Justice Ministries of the Church.

The potential places of participation in this very neglected, yet vitally important, area of disaster mitigation are:

- a. Mitigation planning leadership
- b. Mitigation planning team for Families
- c. Mitigation planning team for Local Church
- d. Mitigation planning for Local Community

As we have mentioned, continuing education, training and leadership development will always be vital and ongoing elements in all areas of our Disaster Ministry. As you can see from the diagram above, each of the four areas is unique and at the same time they overlap and are interlaced. Many times there is interdependency in certain elements with each other.