

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN

For

Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

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This plan is outline to help the church prepare the physical facility before a disaster strikes and then respond to the needs of the local church, community and area following a disaster.

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Introduction

The goal of this disaster response manual is to provide a high level of independence for Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. without traumatizing the church's means. Following a local disaster, there are a number of tough questions to be answered when everything around the church may be seriously damaged or destroyed or there are some services they may not be available. The key here is to be prepared to help save time and reduce frustration in the days/weeks for pre and post disaster. It is the anticipation that being well prepared will help Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. accomplish this. Depending on the magnitude of the event, services may be provided as usual, services may need to be altered temporarily, or in extreme situations, services may be re-located or even discontinued.

- Mitigation – any activity that is undertaken before an emergency strikes to eliminate or reduce the possibility of an emergency or the impact an emergency may have on a community or facility. Example: if subject to frequent power outages, installing a generator.
- Preparedness – planning and getting ready to handle an emergency when it strikes. Example: stockpiling resources for evacuation and sheltering-in-place.
- Response – all activities undertaken at the time of an emergency to save lives and property and reduce injuries. Example: evacuation.
- Recovery – activities undertaken to return things back to normal after response activities have subsided. Example: repairing a damaged building

Overview of Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Disaster Plan

The Westminster Disaster Response is designed to care for the victims of any type of disaster including the people in our congregation and our community, in the event a disaster strikes at home or in the surrounding area, we will:

1. Train Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. volunteers in disaster response, from the pre to the post phases.

2. Use the church as a point of contact for any assistance after any disaster either natural, environmental, man-made as long as it is structurally safe and out of danger from other influences of the disaster.
3. Identify the needs of our congregation, offer assistance from the emergency phase through recovery, paying special and close attention to our senior citizens, persons with physical disabilities, and children.
4. Have immediate access to families.
5. Have a calling process with assignments, questions to ask, and instructions on how to report back the results of personal contact.
6. Impart information to the Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. pastor about the needs and resources that the church can provide.
7. Organize volunteer teams to help at the church and out in the community (ex. feed, shelter, rebuild)
8. Cooperate with emergency response by relaying information about needs in particular areas.

CONGREGATION IN RESPONSE

These are suggested Church Organizational Roles and Areas to enable effective response:

Disaster Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination with pastor, elders, local governmental agencies • communications
Congregational Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact with every household in the congregation identifying needs and status
Administrative Coordinator/Finance Committee/Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep records of service and assistance(what families receive) • Keep records of congregation needs • Contributions • Food and other supplies
Pastoral Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer vigils, emotional and spiritual care, crisis intervention
Clean-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer coordination • Clean up, repairs and salvage

Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setup for cooking and food distribution, water, sanitation, rest and recuperation
Church Property/Trustee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security of church property (repairs and etc.), insurance, damage/status of church property, place of worship
Support of Pastor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insure the safety of the pastor and family both immediately following the disaster and during recovery.

Emergency Coordinator

- Inform pastor and teams of emergency situation.
- Coordinate with local government and enforcement agencies.
- Keep the pastor informed.
- Insure the leaders keep in close (communication/visit if possible).
- Provide guidance and support to all team members and pastor during the disaster.

Congregational Contact

- Contact every household in the congregation.
- Identify needs, status and circumstances.

Administrative Coordinator

- Preplans should be kept up to date.
- Keep journals of all activities.
- Maintain a safe place for church records.
- Have video record of church and all related property inside/outside (for insurance purposes).
- Insure a smooth operation at all times.

Supplies

- **Maintain pre disaster supplies.**

- **Keep a journal.**
- **Execute a system of distributing goods and services.**

Pastor Care

- Follow-up with homebound persons
- Prayer vigil for the recovery, naming congregational persons and needs
- Counseling
- Crisis intervention

Clean Up

- Coordinate work teams with local agencies
- Assemble teams to clean up and put back in use all church facilities.
- Assemble teams to help clean up the community (if needed) paying close attention to the elderly.

Support

- Setup areas for rest and recovery.
- Setup other areas as needed.

Staff Support for Pastors

- Provide days off and time away for pastor for personal care to guard against burnout.
- Insure the safety and housing of pastor.

Church Property

- Security of church property
- Secure temporary place of worship (if needed)
- Coordinate with insurance companies
- Assess damage/status of church property
- Coordination of repairs to church property after insurance assessment

Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. will follow the guidelines and directives of all local authorities. We will keep a journal of everything done; record the events with pictures and videos. These are important documentation of the disaster

and may be useful in obtaining more help and materials when needed. We will remember in all that we do, that God calls us to serve with our hands and hearts, following the lead of the Holy Spirit.

Identify People in the Church and Community

Before a disaster is eminent, people in the church and in the community will be identified by their ability to help, rather than just where they live or not even a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

1. A secure list of people and their addresses will be prepared.
2. List the resources that these people have and are willing to share during times of emergency or need (ex. Chain saws, heavy equipment, food supply, generators, and water supplies).

Information such as the following will be confidential:

- Correct addresses and directions to residence
- Any major health issues (ex. Insulin dependent diabetic, failing lungs)
- Cellular numbers and landline phones

<p>Example: Gertrude M. Washington 1000 Twin Lakes Drive Sumter, SC Married, Retired Teacher</p>

Special Care for Persons with Special Needs

In a disaster, Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. is willing to go beyond their congregation to expand our focus to include persons in the community. The list of congregation needy includes:

- persons confined to their bed or restricted by a wheelchair or walker
- persons who would need assistance in providing more than basic care for themselves.
- Volunteers to help with their grocery shopping, doctor visits, medicine management

- Help to keep the home safe and any other tasks that the person can no longer do for themselves

The above list can be exhaustive. This takes a certain amount of responsibility off the pastor and emergency coordinator

Identify Needs within the Congregation

The first level of response is to the Westminster Presbyterian congregation, then the community and then the state. The existing church directory is a list of the congregation and will be used by the Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Disaster Response Team to collect all of the congregational and report back to the Disaster Response Committee Chairperson regarding the specific needs following a disaster.

1. When disaster warnings are issued for this area, it is recommended to contact the congregation before the storm with the purpose of identifying who will be evacuated and who will stay in the area.
2. After a disaster Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. will concentrate on person-to-person contacts to identify conditions and needs. The calling process:
 - a) Sections of the membership list are assigned to a leader who then contacts those persons on his/her list.
 - b) If the person called does not answer, the caller continues until someone is reached and the list is complete. If someone should be at home and there is no answer, the caller should go check on that person or family. **It is important to keep calling until all have been reached.**
 - c) Record the person's response, noting if there are injuries, crises, and special needs and if the home is livable. Feel free to use some of the following questions/statements to get a better understanding of urgency and needs:
 1. Do you have any damage to your home?
 2. Do you need help? What are your needs?
 3. Can you continue living in your home? Do you have a place to stay?

4. Are your driveway and doors clear to your home?
 5. It is recommended that you contact your insurance company and take photos.
 6. Do you know what agencies to contact for help?
 7. If you are not injured, are you willing to offer help to others and if so, what type?
- d) Contact the emergency post by phone or in person immediately and report your findings.

Respond to Urgent Needs

We will be prepared as early responders, to organize volunteers that can help with debris clearance, temporary safety repairs, roof coverings, food supplies, and other needs as they arise. There should be enough canned, non-perishable food and bottled water for four people for three days. This should be stored and restocked every 6 months as needed.

Volunteers must sign a waiver of liability and medical information forms, leaving a copy of their driver's license and health insurance cards with a designated Westminster Presbyterian Church staff member.

Trustee Responsibility for Church Property

The Board of Trustees and the pastor are responsible for the local church facilities. It is imperative to assign specific responsibility for each of these areas and to protect vital church records.

- Responsible for securing the doors and windows and shutting off the gas, water and electricity
- Gathering church records or valuables
- Keeping inventory and insurance up to date
- Check for damages after a storm
- If church is damaged, where will you meet for worship?
- Make sure the computer data is backed up and stored in a safe off-site location

Use of Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Property as a Shelter

If Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. is offered to be a designated emergency shelter, an approved agency, such as the American Red Cross, will first have to inspect the building and facilities and either accept or reject it as a shelter.

Securing Church Records

Records must be protected if there is a warning with time for gathering certain items. Computerized records should be backed up each time they are updated. Three designated people should maintain at least three copies of the backed up files. Keep in mind the privacy of the church's policy.

Securing Other Assets

If there is prior warning of a disaster, protect more than the church files:

- Cover everything that is placed for protection with at least two to three layers of heavy-duty plastic.
- Place important books, computers, other movable electronics, Bibles, hymnals, and records those are too bulky on top of the highest furniture available that will not be upset or easily float in high water.
- **The altar cross, candles, chalice and etc. should be evacuated with the pastor or other designated person. These items will be necessary in setting up a worship center if the church is destroyed or heavily damaged.**

Westminster Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. As a Spiritual Center

If the church is not heavily damaged and is safe to occupy, it must remain open as a spiritual center. If the whole area is demolished, there will be a need to conduct some sort of Sunday Service.

- Prayer

- Gathering to see who and what is still standing
- Information about members and community

In the event that the church facilities are declared unsafe for any reason, the pastor and available members of the Board of Trustees will select a site where worship can be held.

Take time to connect with other churches, regardless of denominations, before an emergency, so that they may enjoy the cooperative atmosphere in the wake of some disaster.

Disaster-Natural and Human Caused

Depending on our geographical location, we can suffer from snow, ice, flood, extreme heat, tornado, tsunami, earthquake, and strong wind. We must also consider the possibility of forest fires, hazardous materials and nuclear accidents, electrical blackouts, droughts and the results of disasters such as layoffs, plant closings, and loss of wages due to disasters.

It doesn't matter if a disaster affects ten people or a million people, the preparation and initial response of gathering information are the same.