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# Prepare for Crisis in Your Church

## What If...

Your church was paralyzed by the aftermath of crisis?

Would you be ready to respond? How would you help restore the church and its members?

**We can't predict when crisis will happen, but we can be prepared.**

Steps your church can take to develop a crisis recovery plan

### ***Create a Crisis Recovery Team***

- Identify a champion to take the lead on crisis recovery planning and develop a team
- Take a crisis preparedness survey to review your church's strengths and weaknesses (<http://myef.ca/prepare-survey>)

### ***Analyze your risks and vulnerabilities***

- A major part of the disaster recovery planning process is the assessment of the potential threats that could result in crises or emergency situations. It is necessary to consider natural disasters, man-made crisis and chemical/technological hazards. Any incident that impacts the church's ability to function.
- This analysis should be conducted in preparation for creation of your Church Recovery Plan. Both internal and external crises should be analyzed using the rating scales indicated below, evaluate every potential event in each of the following categories: probability, potential impact, and preparedness.
  - ✓ **Internal Crises:** Fire, explosion, flooding, bomb threat, shooting, etc. which threatens the safety of persons within the building and necessitates setting an evacuation plan in order.
  - ✓ **External Crises:** Tornado, flood, disbursement of dangerous airborne particles or poisonous gases which threaten the safety of persons within the community and necessitates setting the evacuation plan in order.
  - ✓ **Estimate Likelihood** (low=1; moderate=2; high=3)  
In the probability column rate the likelihood of occurrence of each potential crisis based on known risk, historical data, and available information from local authorities and emergency personnel.
  - ✓ **Assess Potential Impact** (low=1; moderate=2; high=3) In assessing the potential impact of a crisis event consider: the threat to life and health of people in the congregation and community; disruption of church services/meetings/programs; and property/financial impact.
  - ✓ **Assess Preparedness** (low=3; moderate=2; high=1)  
In assessing preparedness things to consider are: the status of current plans; training status; insurance; availability of back-up systems; and church/community resources.

Potential Threats <i>(natural disaster, man-made crisis, technological hazard)</i>	Likelihood <i>Low, Medium, High</i>	Potential Impact <i>Low, Medium, High</i>			Level of Preparedness <i>Low, Medium, High</i>
		People	Church	Property	

- ✓ Add the total score for each threat in the areas of likelihood, potential impact, and preparedness. The total will represent the events most in need of attention.
  - ❖ Which crises are more likely to occur than others?
  - ❖ Which crises types should your church prepare for?
  - ❖ What should be the scope of your crisis plan?
  - ❖ What is your rationale for including/excluding a crisis?

### **Creating Your Plan**

*Create a plan that addresses your greatest area of risk and response efforts you will take for restoration of the church and its members. Make checklists for each functioning area of team planning that your church is interested in developing as part of the recovery plan. Below is an outline of areas to consider when creating checklists.*

#### **□ Administration**

- ✓ Review insurance coverage on a routine basis
- ✓ Create a budget line for crisis recovery and identify person/s who will make the determination to access this budget
- ✓ Schedule meetings on the church calendar
- ✓ Church members create a core group to begin meeting for the purpose of developing the plan and working through recovery efforts for various crises
- ✓ Maintain ongoing contact with church leadership and congregation
- ✓ Identify the point of contact for crisis recovery planning and during an emergency

#### **□ Facilities:**

- ✓ Identify space to serve as a command center in the event of a crisis with access to phones, computers, office supplies
- ✓ Do a walk-through at the church to identify any safety issues that need to be addressed

- ✓ Develop and post an evacuation plan with maps in locations where church members can see them
- ✓ Create a response plan for damage to the building – assessment, communication, contact information for key repairs
- ✓ Identify alternate facilities for emergency use for services, small groups, studies, youth group, etc. – consider member homes in less vulnerable areas, schools, community centers, contacts church members may have with businesses, etc
- ✓ Develop a back-up data system if one does not exist

## □ **Communication**

- ✓ Create a list for member contact and identify members in vulnerable areas, elderly, disabled and those who may need assistance after crisis
- ✓ Define methods of communication for vision, plan, roles, etc (what needs to be communicated and how)
- ✓ Create updates for congregation on crisis recovery planning and updates during times of emergency
- ✓ Provide handouts for congregational family preparedness (Red Cross, FEMA SAMSHA provide handouts and brochures free online and they are reproducible) to help them prepare for responding to crisis; consider setting up resources in an area of the church where members can have ongoing access to materials and a list of resources

## □ **Crisis Care/Relational Outreach**

- ✓ Identify your vulnerable populations and keep contact information for church members who may be in need of crisis care
- ✓ Create a system for checking in on those who will need assistance
- ✓ Create a resource list that is accessible/communicated for church members for local resources to address crisis needs
- ✓ Identify person/s who can lead prayer walks in the community to pray for neighborhoods and talk/pray with people they come across, then pass on prayer needs to the church/others
- ✓ Identify persons who can do visits and outreach with those in the community who need emotional-spiritual care
- ✓ Develop a prayer team to pray regularly for the planning process and those impacted during crisis
- ✓ Develop a trauma (crisis) care team to respond to the emotional and spiritual needs of the church and community following crisis
- ✓ Identify and train members to do debriefings with those impacted by crisis and those who volunteer to help those impacted by the crisis. This involves a formal session through which the experience is processed. Professional counselors can be used for this and lay people can be trained: ReachGlobal Crisis Response has a *Trauma and Crisis Care Training* for those interested in equipping in this area. This training would be an advanced learning experience for the whole team/church and could help all who attend feel comfortable dealing with people in crisis. Team debriefing sessions should also be held following any team community activities or projects so the team can share their experience.

## ☐ **Volunteer Coordination**

- ✓ If your church would like to be a base for volunteer management and community outreach, coaching is available to establish those crisis response efforts
- ✓ Recruit person with gifting/skills in hosting, organization and people/operations management
- ✓ In the event of a crisis, this person/s is willing to plan for the church to house volunteers
- ✓ Identify church members with a variety of skills in advance for hosting, meals, place for teams to stay, etc
- ✓ Identify logistics for hosting teams (sleeping space, meals, showers, meeting space, etc.).

## ☐ **Field Manager**

- ✓ If the plan includes working with helping to clean, gut and/or repair homes in the community, a person/s will be needed who will help to recruit, coordinate and oversee such jobs, someone with construction skills would be very helpful
- ✓ Develop a system to record work opportunities/requests coming into the church
- ✓ Identify resources within your church – equipment, trailers, materials, skills, etc. for providing recovery service.
- ✓ Consider a small handout/flyer that volunteers and church members can pass on to their neighbors that indicate the church is helping with recovery services and who to contact to see if they can help with meeting needs. There will likely be an increase in the volume of calls to the church, so routing calls for assistance to a designated contact will help alleviate answering phone calls
- ✓ Create a team project such as building a trailer to use during response times or trips
- ✓ Consider these common types of response:
  - ❖ Home reconstruction and repair
  - ❖ Emergency services
  - ❖ Tree and debris removal
  - ❖ Cleaning out flood damaged homes
  - ❖ Dry wall demolition
  - ❖ Helping with meal preparation, clean-up, and other support
  - ❖ Assisting with administrative duties/data entry
  - ❖ Assisting with work assessments
  - ❖ Hosting volunteers
  - ❖ Prayer and relational ministry
  - ❖ Maintenance of the church and housing facility

## ***Partner with Stakeholders***

- ☐ After defining your plan and outreach services your church can provide after crisis, recruit/identify a leader who has or can liaison and increase relationships with community groups – ie. other churches, emergency services (fire, police dept, hospital, etc.) and helping organizations (Salvation Army, Red Cross, United Way, United Methodist, etc.).
- ☐ Start a database on who the contact is for community partners and what resources/services they offer.
- ☐ Consider joining the local/state Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and

attend related meetings as needed.

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### ***Maintaining A Crisis Recovery Plan***

*Once your recovery plan is developed and leaders are in place to jump into action with the various components of your recovery plan, there needs to be an ongoing effort to communicate this plan with others in the church and keep open the opportunity to get more involved. Initially, the team should meet to develop team structure, fit under church, identify leaders, and plan activities that will help the team develop a culture of preparedness to serve at home or deploy to sites.*

- ❑ Once the team structure and any policies are drafted, walk through exercises and drills should be conducted at least twice yearly to practice deployment of the plan and make any needed adjustments due to members changing/moving and other circumstances that will change the plan.
- ❑ Table top drills include the team meeting with church leadership to run through the plan. This is a good way for all to become familiar with the details of the plan, responsible parties, contacts, method of contacting others, etc.
- ❑ After doing a table top drill, a mock exercise would be a progression for another meeting. This is where the team would run through a likely situation that impacts the church, the congregation and the community. The team would work through the steps of the crisis recovery plan (as in the table top exercise), but this time it would be related to a real life scenario. The discussion would include steps people would take and management of the plan. The team can discuss setting up a temporary command center, addressing church damage, doing an inventory of damage to church families and assisting them, helping with the impact on the community. Steps of the response should be defined for each area with designated contacts and leaders.
- ❑ Making an outline for the year will help the team to be strengthened and ready until crisis hits. Leaders should do an ongoing recruitment for areas they are providing leadership.

### ***Developing a Culture of Preparedness***

*Since we cannot predict when crises will occur, it is recommended that the team establish engagement activities that will promote a deeper understanding of responding to crisis. Consider these options for further developing a culture of preparedness at your church:*

- ❑ **Develop a Mobilize Partnership with ReachGlobal Crisis Response:**  
One way to be more prepared at home is for church members to deploy to other crises and learn more about the culture of responding to these needs through that experience.
- ❑ **Experiential Training:**  
ReachGlobal invites your team members to come to the New Orleans site for a hands-on experience and further training. This does not have to be limited to your leadership team; team members who have a vested interest in helping to further develop your recovery plan or who you are grooming into leaders would also be good candidates for this trip.
- ❑ **Community Activities:**

As your team develops a better understanding of responding to crises, members are encouraged to plan structured activities that help them to put into practice what they have learned. One way for your church to practice prior to a crisis is to select a community project or participate in/host activities that help meet crisis needs within your community. A project or event can be targeted in a local area that your church is interested in reaching, to help a church family in need to do a service activity. Community projects can be a great way to strengthen team relationships.

- ❑ ReachGlobal Crisis Response is available for consultation, training and coaching in the area of Crisis Recovery Planning ([crisisresponsetraining@efca.org](mailto:crisisresponsetraining@efca.org))