



Disaster Times

Partnering for Disaster Response

Volume 1, Issue 2

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Special points of interest:

Rise Up & Build Concludes

A Volunteer's perspective

Preparing for Disaster

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Rise Up & Build concludes ... for now

"Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me ... And they said, 'Let us rise up and build.' So they strengthened their hands for this good work."
Nehemiah 2:18

That's exactly what they did! An incredible 145 volunteers from North Dakota, Montana, South Dakota, and bordering states lived out these words by volunteering to become a part of Rise Up & Build.

Rise Up & Build are ecumenical mission trips coordinated through Lutheran Disaster Response, a program of Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota, Montana and South Dakota. This past January and February four groups of volunteers were sent to Biloxi, Miss., and one group ventured to Winter Haven, Fla. The mission: assist in

rebuilding homes of those who were impacted by hurricanes.

The Mississippi volunteer teams worked in tandem with volunteer coordinators at Camp Biloxi and Bethel Lutheran Church. They have a tent city which accommodates up to 200 volunteers.

Rise Up & Build was fortunate to have Pastor Keith Gunderson of Cando, N.D., volunteer six weeks of his time to the effort. Pastor Gunderson worked as a liaison between the volunteers and Camp Biloxi to match our volunteers with jobs that needed to be done, as well as monitoring of work being done.

The Florida crew, led by Kirk Rosin with Lutheran Layman's League, traveled by bus to Winter Haven, Fla. They were fortunate enough to find host families and churches who were willing to

give them shelter during their journey.

The Rise Up & Build volunteers put in an amazing 10,230 hours of work in 25 homes. Many of the volunteers were overwhelmed by the vast amount of destruction. It is hard to comprehend the amount of time and effort it is going to take to rebuild the homes and lives of the people of the Gulf Coast. It has been estimated that it will take seven to 10 years to rebuild and recover from Hurricane Katrina.

Due to an overwhelming response from the volunteers, a second Rise Up & Build effort is being planned for late fall of 2006, or winter of 2007. The details are yet to be determined, but anyone who is interested in becoming a part of Rise Up & Build, or contributing to the effort, can contact Lutheran Disaster Response at (800) 950-2901.



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EXTREME VOLUNTEERING Hurricane volunteer shares perspective

My husband and I first heard about the opportunity to volunteer following a sermon at our church. We had never considered this type of volunteer work before. For some reason we both knew we wanted to go on this trip.

Many, including myself assumed that most of the effected areas had been cleaned and were functioning on a normal level. Our first glimpse revealing that this wasn't the case occurred more than 20 miles inland from the coastline. As we got closer, we began to see all the blue tarps on damaged homes and businesses serving as temporary roofs. No structure, road, billboard or traffic sign we saw were spared from storm damage. It was evident everywhere, and we were still miles from the coast.

Once we arrived in Biloxi, we were both silent as we drove, trying to absorb what we were looking at. There

was litter everywhere, and debris piles as high at 20 feet in front of homes, businesses and on street corners.

It was finally time to head out for our first day on the job. We easily located the house, which was in a neighborhood not far from the bay. The surrounding homes were either completely gone, or in a condition not fit to live in.

There was much laughter and joking among the group as we all busily worked on the house. Seeing a former unlivable home becoming livable again was one of the many rewards we had that week. Another big reward was seeing the delighted faces of the homeowners after all the rooms had been painted. Yes, there were some jobs that weren't pleasant to do that week, but they always got done. Many of us were learning to do things we had never done before.

I felt a sense of satisfaction mixed with

sadness looking at the house that I had actually helped to rebuild. I began to understand as we drove away. I didn't have the needed skills initially to help restore a house, but someone else did who was willing to teach me. As for getting emotionally involved, you don't work in an environment like we did and not become emotionally involved with the people. It is a necessary part of the healing process for them that you are there to listen to their stories. Everywhere we went we heard from people about the need for many more volunteers to help restore their neighborhoods and their lives.

The only requirement to volunteer is the willingness to help others who have had their lives turned upside down.

Adare lives in Hermosa, S.D., and spent two weeks with Rise Up & Build in Biloxi, Miss.

Seven months after storm, damage still extreme

Katrina's aftermath is startling, but so are the number of volunteers and high spirits.

Seven months after hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck, Louisiana's Gulf Coast is still a wasteland. Residents live in trailers, some in tents. Debris is strewn about everywhere. Houses can be found football fields away from their foundations and cars are twisted into barely recognizable hunks of metal. Trees are bent at the trunk, all in the same direction as if they bow to the great Gulf Coast. Giant fishing boats sit in the middle of residential neighborhoods and fishing nets are tangled in trees. A McDonald's arch looks like a

skeleton after its paint and decoration has been worn off. The grass is replaced by shards of glass and bits of everything — wood, shingles, plastic, carpet, clothes, leaves and personal belongings of every sort. Birds don't chirp and cats wander, ownerless, searching for food and shelter.

And yet residents keep their sanity and sense of humor. Some live in FEMA-provided trailers amongst massive piles of debris, while others simply live in tents set on house foundations. Neighbors still have cookouts and sit on lawn chairs and chat.

No article, TV spot or

photo album can fully convey how much damage was done to the Gulf Coast

Despite the thousands of volunteers, so much more needs to be done. More than 300,000 houses were damaged or destroyed by the hurricanes. The death toll, as of March 7, was 1,422.

With all the residents scattered around the country (Hurricane Katrina resulted in the United States' largest metro evacuation ever — more than 1.5 million — in about 40 hours), and all the damage incurred, it will be years before the Gulf Coast even slightly resembles life before Katrina.

Prepare your home for disaster

Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services—water, gas, electricity or telephones were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away. So what can you do? There are four steps to consider when preparing for disaster.

1. Find out what types of natural disasters are likely to happen in your area. Learn about your community's warning signals, and what to do

when you hear them.

2. Create a disaster plan. Create an evacuation plan and pick a place to meet. Discuss with family the types of disasters that can happen.

3. Compile an emergency check list. This list should include emergency phone numbers, turning off utilities, and where supplies are stocked. Each family member should be familiar with this list, and how to complete it.

Practice and maintain your plan. Keep children involved with practicing to ensure they know the plan. Test and replace emergency supplies.

Working with neighbors can save lives and property.

Meet with your neighbors to plan how the neighborhood could work together after a disaster until help arrives. If you're a member of a neighborhood organization, such as crime watch, introduce disaster preparedness as a new activity. Know your neighbors' special skills and consider how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as disabled and elderly persons. Make plans for child care in case parents can't get home.

Remember, disaster can strike anywhere at anytime, it's a good idea to prepare ahead of time.



“Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your

“Lutheran Disaster Response is available to help congregations become prepared to respond to disasters.”

Get your church, business ready for potential disasters

Why bother? Disasters don't happen here.

Even if you think you are not in a disaster-prone area, something like a chemical tanker truck overturning can prevent you and your parishioners or employees from getting to your facility. Even if a flood doesn't put your church or business under water, how will people be able to get to you? Power outages, brown-outs or surges can affect your daily operations. Many disasters, like wind storms, tornadoes and earthquakes, can strike quickly and with little or no warning.

While reports vary, as many as 40 percent of small businesses do not reopen after a major disaster like a flood, tornado or earthquake. These

shuttered businesses were unprepared for a disaster; they had no plan or backup systems.

When you start to develop your disaster plan, consider three subjects: human resources, physical resources and business continuity. Think about how a disaster could affect your employees, parishioners, customers and workplace. Think about how you could continue doing business, or carrying on your mission, if the area around your facility is closed or streets are impassable. Think about what you would need to serve your customers or parishioners even if your facility is closed.

Some suggestions to consider when building your plan:

- Keep phone lists of key people.
- Back up computer information frequently.
- Proper use of surge protectors and battery backup systems.
- Stock a minimum supply of goods that you would need to continue serving the community.
- Consult with an insurance agent about precautions to take for disasters that may directly impact you.
- Keep emergency supplies handy.

Everyone in your facility should know how to prepare for a disaster and what to do if a disaster occurs.



“Being prepared ahead of time can make all the difference when disaster strikes.”



Lutheran Disaster Response is a program of



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Mission: Guided by God's love and grace, Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota brings healing, help and hope.



Online: www.lssmt.org

Mission: Lutheran Social Services of Montana is a ministry of caring people and congregations responding to God's love in Jesus Christ by serving children, families and individuals through counseling, education, adoption, and specialized ministries"



Phone: (800) 568-2401
Online: www.lsssd.org

Mission: Inspired by God's love, we care for, support and strengthen individuals, families and communities.

SPIRITUAL CARE

Bringing God's peace to disaster

Disaster recovery programs can rebuild and repair homes and replace physical losses, but they will be unsuccessful unless they meet the spiritual needs of survivors and their communities. In fact, disaster recovery is ultimately a spiritual matter—helping people accept their losses and positively begin life anew.

Pastoral or spiritual care helps people find meaning in the events that have occurred; transcend those events to a realized resurrection and new life; discover the redemptive possibilities present in the experience; find peace, new meaning for life, and new anchors for living and concrete symbols of hope. Spiritual care is about providing hope.

As important as spiritual/pastoral care is for survivors, clergy and other caregivers also gain strength

to continue their response work and avoid burnout through pastoral care.

Frustration comes with disasters. Things just don't go right most of the time. Tempers grow very short and fault finding is raised to an art form.

Frustration can be a killer to an organization, a recovery effort, and to individuals and families. Caregivers who burnout feel exhausted and less confident about themselves. They expect the worst—and get it. Their job performance deteriorates. Their troubles at home with family increase.

Caregivers need support, a friendly ear, some time off, contact and encouragement from friends and bosses, and prayers.

Effective pastoral/spiritual care for both survivors and caregivers occurs within the context of community. Individuals and families can only be healthy

in healthy communities. The Community—carrier of so much of the people's memories, traditions, hopes, and healing power ultimately sustains the dreams, visions, and the life of the people.

When a community is disrupted, people exhibit varied behavioral problems. The ties that provide important psychological support to individuals in times of stress are not available.

Pastoral/spiritual care appreciates the value of community symbols—a building, tree, or church, for example. When the symbol is gone, there may be a sense that the town is gone. When the symbol is restored, there may be a feeling that the town is back. A disaster may also create new symbols about the town's ability to recover. Pastor/spiritual care helps a community restore its old symbols and recognize and incorporate new symbols into its history.

SAID training helps churches prepare

Across America there is a heightened awareness for organizations and individuals to be prepared to respond to disaster, whether natural or human-caused. The church has a unique role in reaching out to those in need, but often is not well informed concerning the particular dynamics of trauma and crisis.

SAID (Spiritual Accompaniment in Disaster) Training will help answer important questions for clergy and other faith leaders!

If a natural or human-caused disaster strikes our community what are the important first steps?

How can I as a leader in a faith-based organization

make a positive difference in the lives of disaster survivors?

How do ecumenical and secular partners work together in response?

What is the long-term role of the faith community in disaster recovery?

This training will become an essential part of your ministry when faced with a crisis in your community. All of the presenters have stood with victims of major disasters, including 9/11.

They come prepared to share their experiences and insights to help you offer a compassionate and effective response to those who are suffering.

After the "Spiritual Accompaniment In Disaster"

training you will be eligible to apply to become a part of the SAID Network. The role of the SAID Network includes helping victims of disaster draw upon their own spiritual/religious resources; providing respite for clergy and other spiritual caregivers; offering assistance in coping with grief, loss and stress; and, working cooperatively with federal, state, and other emergency service organizations.

There are SAID trainings being scheduled in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana this fall and winter. Specific information on these trainings will be sent out once they have been determined.