



## OPC Presbytery Disaster Response Oversight *Preparation and Response*

### 1. PHILOSOPHY (WHY)

- a. The primary goal of disaster response in the OPC is to **restore worship** within OPC churches and families and to **demonstrate the compassionate love of Christ** to our neighbors
  - *And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matt 22:37-40*
- b. Christians are not to presume upon the Lord’s goodness, but rather to **plan for the future.**
  - *“You shall not put the LORD your God to the test...” Deut 6:16*
  - *“Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.” Prov 6:6*
  - i. Preparation *before* the disaster is the best protection from disasters and the key to effective ministry during a disaster.
    1. This begins with the individual, then church, then presbytery.
    2. Yet, cooperating and working together strengthens preparation (efforts are multiplied) and is a picture of the body of Christ.
- c. **Presbyteries are well-suited to coordinate.**
  - i. Disasters are inherently local and regional matters.
  - ii. Those closest to it are much better equipped to make decisions of how and when to respond than those far away.
  - iii. This is consistent with other ministry in the Presbyterian church. Oversight is first local, then regional, and lastly, denominational.
  - iv. Coordination at each level is imperative for this to be effective.
- d. **Stewardship of resources** is a God-given responsibility, mandating preparing for the worst.
  - *In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other... Eccl 7:14a*
  - *Fill the earth and **subdue** it. Gen 1:28*
- e. **OPC Disaster Response** is available to the presbytery, upon request, in:
  - i. Providing leadership and strategies learned from previous disaster responses efforts.
  - ii. Communicating with sister denominations about cooperating on disaster relief.
  - iii. Mobilizing volunteers.



- iv. Communicating needs and prayer requests to the Church.
  - v. Receiving funds contributed for the care of the victims of the disaster.
- f. How the church responds in times of disaster is a **witness** to the watching world. Christ and his glory lies at the center of disaster preparation and response efforts. These efforts develop best under the strength and guidance of the Lord.
- *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16*

## 2. POLICY (WHAT)

- a. **Before** a Disaster
  - i. **Organization**
    - 1. The presbytery ought to appoint a **committee** to oversee disaster response.
    - 2. The committee ought to appoint a Regional Disaster Response **Coordinator** (RDRC) who has:
      - a. Leadership skills
      - b. Management skills
      - c. A heart for mercy ministry
      - d. Authorization to speak on behalf of the regional church.
    - 3. The committee ought to encourage churches to appoint a Local Coordinator with similar traits as the Regional Coordinator
    - 4. The Regional Coordinator ought to encourage local churches and families to be prepared to meet their needs and those around them in the event of a disaster.
      - *Carry each other's burdens...Gal 6:2*
  - ii. **Structures** need to be in place in order to mobilize volunteers and put into motion the chain of events of disaster response.
  - iii. **Information** needs to be gathered from each church prior to a disaster.
  - iv. **Volunteers'** contact information shall be gathered in advance of a disaster
  - v. **Supplies** should be on hand to enable ones family to survive after a disaster and to have left over to share with others.
  - vi. **Training** should be coordinated regionally and locally.
- b. **After** a Disaster
  - i. **Neighboring presbyteries** ought to be prepared to come alongside an overwhelmed presbytery.
  - ii. **Prayer requests** ought to be communicated to the presbytery.



- c. Other
  - i. This document ought to be continually improved over the years.

### 3. PROCEDURE (HOW)

- a. Establish a new committee or direct an existing committee to take oversight of disaster response. **This committee shall be expected to:**
  - i. Elect a Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary and appoint other officers, as necessary.
  - ii. Meet as required.
  - iii. Appoint a **Regional Coordinator** and an **Alternate**. Normally, this would be the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, respectively.
  - iv. **Advise** the Regional Coordinator as required.
  - v. **Inform** the OPC Disaster Response Coordinator (National Coordinator) and the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of the names and contact information of the Regional Coordinator and the Alternate.
  
- b. The **Regional Coordinator** shall be expected to:
  - i. **Before** a Disaster
    1. Develop a **database** of resources in the region to be used in the event of a disaster.
    2. Gather contact info for **volunteers**, including their availability and skills.
    3. **Educate** the presbytery in the area of disaster response.
    4. **Gather** geographic, demographic, and readiness status of each church in the presbytery.
    5. Encourage each church to consider the appointment of a **Local Coordinator** who, in turn, shall gather geographic, demographic, and readiness status of each of its members.
    6. Complete, with the help of each Local Coordinator, a survey of church members' **interests and skills** (see Appendix A).
    7. Communicate to the **National Coordinator** periodically on matters concerning disaster response and regional actions.
    8. Consider reaching out to "Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster" (**VOAD**) in the region.
    9. Communicate with **sister denominations** about cooperating on disaster relief.
    10. **Receive calls** from National Coordinator, Local Coordinators, government agencies, or volunteer agencies.
    11. Conduct **rehearsals** for the purpose of assessing disaster readiness in the presbytery.
    12. Facilitate **training** and providing information about training opportunities for churches and volunteers.
      - a. Training ought to include proper **etiquette** for volunteers, such as, flexibility, patience and safety



when responding and respect when working on disaster victims' property.

- b. Volunteers should also be **cautioned** about entering a disaster zone uninvited, as this can cause problems for local officials and emergency operations centers and/or the local OPC church.

ii. **Anticipating** a Disaster

1. **Alert** volunteers that they might be called to serve.
2. **Purchase** necessary consumables, such as fuel, etc.
3. **Stage** equipment, if applicable.

iii. **After** the Disaster

1. **Survey** those in the affected area for status
2. **Assess** the damage and the ways to help.
3. Identify an "**Operations Center**".
4. Identify the material, financial, and volunteer **needs**.
5. **Communicate** the need for assistance regionally, to neighboring presbyteries, to the National Coordinator, and/or to VOAD.
  - a. For prayer.
  - b. For volunteers.
  - c. For resources.
6. Establish a "**Volunteer Staging Area**" and coordinate volunteer lodging and meal information in coordination with the National Coordinator.
7. **Coordinate** the dispatching of disaster response teams and volunteers.
8. **Report** to the committee after a disaster response effort is completed.

**Appendices A-D:**

- A. Church Member Disaster Response Interest and Skills Survey
- B. Church Potential for Disaster Response
- C. Key People in the OPC, State, County, City, and Community
- D. Family Disaster Information