



**Preparing for Disaster:
A Guide and Workbook for Congregations
of the
Southwestern Texas Synod**

***“The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.”***

Zephaniah 3:15b

Acknowledgements, Sources, and Resources

Materials and information in this guide and workbook were compiled from and based on the following resources:

Preparing for Disaster: A Guide for Lutheran Congregations. Lutheran Disaster Response: Chicago 2002. www.elca.org/dcs/disaster.

Make a Plan for Disaster Preparedness: A Workbook for Disaster Preparedness for the Faith Community. Texas Interagency Interfaith Disaster Response: Austin, Texas: 2008. www.tidr.org.

This guide and workbook was compiled and adapted for the Disaster Preparedness Task Force of the Southwestern Texas Synod Commission for Congregational Life by Richard Gates in partial fulfillment of an internship project. Richard, a student at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, is the 42nd intern pastor at First English Lutheran Church, Austin, Texas.

May, 2009

This guide and workbook may be copied as needed.

A digital copy of this document is available online through the Southwestern Texas Synod website at <http://www.swtsynod.org>.

Where do we begin?

Every disaster is unique and unfolds in its own way. Sometimes with warning. Sometimes without warning. Regardless of the particular circumstances of a disaster, though, many disaster response professionals see phases of disasters that tend to be helpful in preparation, planning, and review as well as in the immediacy of disaster in progress.

Phase 1: First Response (Page 2)

This phase occurs in the immediate moments, hours, and days surrounding a disaster. Emergency needs are of utmost importance and concern for safety and the preservation of life and property is foremost. Relief is a second important aspect of this phase. This includes the care for basic human and operational needs.

Phase 2: Recovery (Page 9)

There are often both short-term and long-term aspects to this phase. Detailed assessment of the effects of the disaster and identification of unmet needs are undertaken as affected communities begin to move toward the formation of a “new” normality.

Phase 3: Mitigation (Page 13)

Goals during this phase center on reducing the disaster’s long-term risk and damage to people and property. Community education and awareness are often key aspects of this phase of a disaster.

Phase 4: Preparation (Page 14)

In this phase, congregations are involved in developing and updating disaster response plans.

This guide and workbook is organized according to these commonly understood phases.

If you are organizing a disaster preparedness plan for the first time, turn to **page 14** to begin with the background, information, and guidance provided in ***Phase 4: Preparation***.

If you are reviewing or updating an existing plan, it may be more helpful to begin on **page 2** with ***Phase 1*** and then continue your review through each of the phases in turn.

Checklists and worksheets are included throughout that will be helpful both in preparation and in the immediacy of Phases 1, 2, and 3 should your congregation experience a disaster.



Phase 1A: Emergency

**Preservation of Life & Property:
Police, Firefighters, EMS, Hazardous Materials Teams, Etc.**

- Emergency agencies contacted?

Emergency Phone:

Dial 9-1-1

Non-Emergency Police/Fire:

- Congregation leaders check in

**Primary Disaster Contact Person
and communication coordinator in an emergency**

Name: _____
Phone: _____
Phone/Text: _____
E-mail: _____

**Alternative Disaster Contact Person
and communication coordinator in an emergency**

Name: _____
Phone: _____
Phone/Text: _____
E-mail: _____

In case of impending storm or other disaster with warning, the following persons will provide leadership for:

- Securing church records

Name: _____

Phone/Text: _____

E-mail: _____

- Cutting off the utilities

Name: _____

Phone/Text: _____

E-mail: _____

- Covering the windows

Name: _____

Phone/Text: _____

E-mail: _____

- Taking down or securing any exterior swinging fixtures such as signs or lights

Name: _____

Phone/Text: _____

E-mail: _____

- Securing loose items around the church

Name: _____

Phone/Text: _____

E-mail: _____



Phase 1B: Relief

Care for Basic Human and Operational Needs / Assessment

Relief at the local congregation building and site

- Is anyone injured?
- Is the building structure intact?
- Is all equipment exterior to the building intact?
- Are all entrances and exits clear and able to be locked?
- Is the structural interior of the building intact?
- Is the electrical system functioning?
- Is the plumbing system intact and functioning?
- Are the computers intact and functioning?
- Are the storerooms damaged?
- Is the stock intact?

Continuance of Core Ministries

Primary Operating Location	Alternative Operating Location(s) if our primary location is inaccessible
<hr/> Congregation	<hr/> Location
<hr/> Address	<hr/> Address
<hr/> City, State, ZIP	<hr/> City, State, ZIP
<hr/> Phone	<hr/> Phone

Important Contact Information

Congregational Leaders Emergency Contact Information			
Name	Phone	Alt. Phone or Text	E-mail

Staff and Members Who Have Key to Building(s)			
Name	Phone	Alt. Phone or Text	E-mail

Emergency Contact with Local Authorities				
Emergency or Interruption	Agency	Contact Name	Phone	Alt. Phone or Text
Electric				
Gas				
Water				
Phone				
Internet				

- Contact the synod office and/or Lutheran Disaster Response.

Southwestern Texas Synod

Phone: 830-379-9900

FAX: 830-379-9990

E-mail: info@swtsynod.org

Lutheran Disaster Response

Austin: 512-459-1000

Chicago: 800-638-3522, ext. 2748

Chicago FAX: 773-380-2493

E-mail: LutheranDisasterResponse@elca.org

Current Insurance Coverage		
Policy Type	Carrier	Agent Contact Information

Security Information		
Service Provider	Contact Name	Phone and Contact Information

Legal Assistance		
Law Firm	Attorney	Contact Information

Relief in the congregational and local communities

- Survey church staff and members to determine those affected and assess their immediate needs. Care of most vulnerable: elderly, single parents, and mentally ill will be a priority.
- Church buildings close to the area may be used as temporary shelters. Your facility must be pre-approved by the Red Cross.
- Unaffected members may respond by serving at shelters, feeding center, and clean-up sites.
- The pastoral staff may respond to needs of people suffering injury or families mourning losses.

- Call 2-1-1 for information specific to your area regarding need for volunteers as well as information about those that need assistance.

- Attend local VOAD & ecumenical meetings (see page 27 for more information)
- Provide Lutheran presence
- Visit local site and assess
- Shelter (homes, churches with Red Cross leadership)
- Provide food (with local food banks and pantries)
- Clothe (with local efforts)
- Provide spiritual care
- Clean-up
- Receive fund from ELCA donors and others (limited)
- Disperse funds for local needs
- Receive donations (goods)
- Help applicants file forms for assistance
- Assist people returning home

- Be a listener: People need to tell their story again and again to help them through the trauma and grief. Church member can provide listening ears to those affected
- Be an encourager: Encourage those affected to apply for assistance. Publicize the disaster assistance help number.
- Be mindful: Always be mindful of safety and curfews. Adhere to all civil authority requirements. Discourage rumors. Share accurate information.

Members Who Are Homebound or with Special Needs

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Additional Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Important Information to Know: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Additional Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Important Information to Know: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

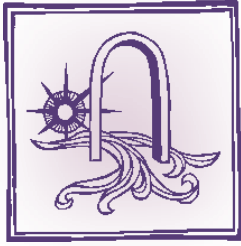
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Additional Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Important Information to Know: _____



Phase 2: Recovery

Restoration to “New” Normal – Short-term and Long-term

Recovery at the local congregation building/site

- Call in the emergency response staff/team
- Can the building function the next day?
 - If no, contact staff and activate plan.
 - If yes, have calls been made to replace damaged equipment, remove debris?
- Has the insurance company been notified?
- Have photos been taken of the damage?
- Determine continuity strategy (cleanup, emergency repairs, alternate site, etc.)
- Staff and key members operate out of primary, alternate, or home location?
- Notify membership and give information and instructions as necessary
- Notify synod staff and provide current contact information, status, assessment of needs
- Notify ministry partners and suppliers of needs/location changes as appropriate
- Contact vendor/members for facility repair/cleanup

Our Critical Ministries, Programs, and Operations

This is a prioritized list of our critical areas of ministry and related necessary leadership. Action plans for recovery of these ministry areas follow.

Ministry/Program/Operation	Person(s) in Charge	Action Plan Reference

Action Plans for Recovery of Critical Ministries

Worship Ministry Action Plan (an abbreviated example)

- Can the worship space function the next day?
 - If no, contact staff and activate plan.
 - If yes, have calls been made to replace damaged equipment, remove debris?

- Determine location and time of next worship service(s).
- Contact communications/evangelism team(s) to publicize the fact that church services will be held as well as the location and time. Also publicize the availability of pastoral care.
- Determine ministerial leadership for worship.
- Inventory and assess available worship resources (Bibles, hymnals, worship books, functioning copier and available paper supply, candles, access to SundaysAndSeasons.com, musical instruments, etc.).
- Gather and acquire any necessary supplies for worship (Bible for scripture readings, bread, wine, serving ware for communion, etc.).
- Prepare worship according to available resources (hymn selections, congregational prayers, etc.).
- Review plans with ministerial leadership:
 - Assisting ministers
 - Musicians
 - Ushers
 - Acolytes

- **Pandemic Flu Danger?**
 - Use and encourage alternate forms of greeting and sharing the Peace
 - Nodding, bowing, touching elbows
 - Use disposable communion cups during the time of infection danger
 - Ministers and assisting ministers use hand sanitizer following the Peace and prior to the Meal
 - Provide hand sanitizer in narthex for use by all as they gather for worship
 - Postpone weddings and other large gatherings; alter format for small gathering when necessary
 - Ensure coffee, refreshments, and other food items are being prepared and served with care to proper and healthy food-handling practices

Ministry Partners, Suppliers, and Vendors Necessary to Our Ministries

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Contact Name: _____

Account Number: _____ u

Materials/Service Provided: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Contact Name: _____

Account Number: _____

Materials/Service Provided: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Contact Name: _____

Account Number: _____

Materials/Service Provided: _____

Recovery in the wider community:

- Provide Lutheran presence
- Restore church buildings
- Restore church staff
- Clean-up of homes and buildings
- Repair and renovate homes
- Provide housing for volunteers
- Coordinate volunteers
- Provide case management
- Provide spiritual care
- Coordinate/host children's ministry and camps
- Work with long-term recovery team in the community



Phase 4: Preparation

Develop, evaluate, and update disaster response plan

Why Develop a Disaster Preparedness Plan?

A disaster plan is a guide for your congregation to:

- Care for members
- Continue ministry and services
- Protect property
- Recover or repair disaster-related damages
- Communicate information

A plan is relevant and useful if it is:

- Developed by people who are concerned
- Tailored to the geographical situation and needs of the members
- Implemented and tested, to the extent possible, before disaster strikes
- Developed to include training for persons responsible during an emergency
- Reviewed and updated regularly

The planning process is more important than a document on a shelf. During the group planning process, individual concerns are expressed, priorities are set and values assigned to people's needs and to property. Planners get to know each other's gifts and capabilities, and energy is generated for caring for one another in a crisis.

Establishing a disaster preparedness team in the congregation ensures that congregational members are prepared, that the pastor and church leaders have made advance commitments to help others in times of disaster and that congregational activities are coordinated with those of the community.

Step 1: Establish a disaster preparedness team

The following people from our congregation, community, council, and property team, are participants in preparedness planning and crisis management:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Step 2: Identify Potential Disasters

A disaster is an event beyond resulting in great harm, suffering, destruction, and damage that is beyond the control of the individuals affected. It disrupts community and personal life. It involves a significant number of people and causes physical, emotional, economic, social and/or spiritual crises.

Generally, disasters strike without warning. Each disaster is different in magnitude and impact on the affected area. People react differently and local authorities are often hard pressed to manage the impact of the disaster on the community.

While state and national relief efforts are being mobilized, the local church has an opportunity to reach out and minister to those in need in the community. The Church's response to a disaster is a commitment and witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ to assist those affected by the disaster.

Use these lists to identify potential causes for disaster in your community.

Natural	Technological	Societal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Flood <input type="checkbox"/> Hurricane <input type="checkbox"/> Tornadoes <input type="checkbox"/> Earthquake <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme heat <input type="checkbox"/> Thunderstorms <input type="checkbox"/> Ice storms <input type="checkbox"/> Fire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous materials <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad accidents <input type="checkbox"/> Highway accidents <input type="checkbox"/> Trucking accidents <input type="checkbox"/> Building/house fires/arson <input type="checkbox"/> Radiological accidents <input type="checkbox"/> Terrorism <input type="checkbox"/> Power failures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Family violence <input type="checkbox"/> Community violence <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Child abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Racism/ethnic conflict <input type="checkbox"/> Economic issues <input type="checkbox"/> Homelessness

Step 3: Survey the facilities

Having in mind the various types of disaster than can affect your facility, take a walking tour and make note of any obvious areas that may cause problems for the safety of lives or property in the event of a local disaster.

Some items to watch for and note during your tour:

- Phones and phone numbers
 - Is there an accessible, working phone in each area of the building?
 - Are emergency numbers clearly available nearby?
9-1-1; police; fire; poison control; etc.
 - Are emergency contact numbers for the congregation posted, current, and visible from outside?
Primary and alternative disaster contact persons; pastor; council president

- Exits
 - Are they appropriately marked and lighted?
 - Are they free from obstructions that might impede evacuation?
 - Any doors, hallways, or passages leading to exits locked?
 - Contingency plans for handicapped persons?

- Fire extinguishers and related equipment
 - Are they readily visible and accessible?
 - Fully charged, inspected, and tagged?
 - Extinguishers appropriate for type of use?
Ordinary fire; grease; oil; electrical
 - Fire alarms maintained and checked?
 - Smoke detectors maintained and checked?

- Electrical and gas equipment
 - Where are the breaker switches or fuse boxes?
 - Are all breakers marked?
 - Are switches and outlet boxes covered?
 - Are electrical units grounded?
 - Any circuits overloaded?
 - Any equipment in use after hours? Where?
 - Where is gas main or meter shut-off valve? The wrench needed?

- Chemicals
 - Are there any combustibles stored in the facility?
 - Where? Are they stored correctly?
Paint; solvents; cleaning fluids; thinners; toner; propane; toxics; corrosives

- Church records
 - Are any records located in vulnerable locations?
 - Is their storage location clearly marked?
 - What records are missing or not located at the church?

- Other
 - Does the EMS and Fire Department know the different areas of your facility to enable them quick access?
 - Location of keys for all doors and buildings?
 - Location of first aid kit(s)? Are they fully stocked?
 - Location of wheelchair and/or stretcher?
 - Location of battery operated radio?
 - Location of emergency water and food supply?

Step 4: Prepare the Facility for a Disaster

A. Post emergency numbers by each phone.

Include 9-1-1, the poison control center, law enforcement, and the fire department. Make sure a phone is accessible in each area of the building at all hours.

B. Review insurance policies annually.

Insurance policy meets the minimum requirements of the mortgage holder. When was the last estimate on the value of church property? How accurate are the figures?

Insurance policy covers the cost of recent additions or high value items such as stained glass windows?

Insurance policy covers the cost of temporary rental of another facility in the event your church is severely damaged or destroyed?

Insurance policy covers the cost of temporary rental housing for the parsonage family in the event that the parsonage is severely damaged or destroyed? (Your church policy may not cover the cost of replacing the clergy's personal items; the pastor should obtain a separate renter's policy. But a renter's policy may not cover the pastor's personal items in the church.)

C. Protect church records

Church records are a vital part of your church organization. Safeguarding them should be a matter of simple routine and limited expense. (If your records are not kept safe, what you do to restore them will seem like a disaster itself!)

Here are suggestions of some simple things to do now:

- Put your vital records in a fireproof safe and mark them "for church records only." Do not keep money in the safe. Ensure the safe is big enough to hold the kind of oversize books that are normally used. Also ensure the container is watertight.
- User a safe deposit box for those records (such as deeds, insurance papers, and mortgages) that are not used frequently.
- If your church uses a computer for its finances or other vital functions, be sure your treasurer backs up work and takes the backup home. The regular membership and other specialized data can be stored in the safe, or the secretary can take the backups home.

Computer and Records Security

To protect our computer hardware, we will:

To protect our computer software, we will:

If our computers are destroyed, we will use back-up computers at the following location:

_____ is responsible for backing up our critical records
(including financial records)

Back-up records (including a copy of this plan, site maps, insurance policies, bank records, and computer back-ups) are stored onsite

_____.

Another set of back-up records is stored off-site

_____.

If financial records are destroyed, we will provide for continuity in the following ways:

Valuable Documents, Books, and Records			
Item	Location	Backup	If Yes, Location

D. Protect valuable church items

Art, paraments, vestments, and other valuable church items and contents may represent significant investment of the congregation’s resources in addition their liturgical, historical, and intrinsic value. Review and assessment of procedures for protecting these items can be an important stewardship aspect of the disaster preparedness plan.

Other Valuable Items			
Item	Location	Value	Insurance/Other Info

Step 5: Prepare for Shelter and Evacuation Needs

Identify and prepare storm and emergency shelter areas.

- We have developed these plans in collaboration with neighboring businesses, facilities, and residents of the community.
- We have talked to members about which emergency supplies, if any, this congregation will provide in a shelter situation and which supplies individuals might consider keeping in a portable kit personalized for individual needs.
- We have located, copied, and posted building and site maps.
- Exits are clearly marked and accessible.
- We will practice evacuation procedures _____ time(s) a year.
- We will practice shelter procedures _____ time(s) a year.

If we must take shelter quickly:

If we must leave and evacuate the worship or education facility quickly:

Evacuation Assistance

If we must assist those who are homebound or need special assistance in evacuating:

- Secure a list of those to contact (see page10).
- Call closest pre-identified member to assist member-in-need.
- Contact emergency personnel for assistance as needed.

A Place to Go

Having a “Place to Go” is a good tool for evacuation. Partner with other congregations and faith communities that may come your way if their community is evacuated. Welcome evacuated families into the homes of your families. Offer your facility as a meeting place for displaced friends and families.

- Post names of your partner congregations.
- Develop plans for welcoming an evacuated faith community.
- Create directions to alternative worship and operating location (for reference in car).
- Pre-publish at least two designated phone numbers to help members stay in contact.

Step 6: Prepare for a Pandemic Flu

The Christian model of care has been built upon human interaction and closeness. However, during a pandemic, social distancing reduces the spread of communicable illness. This involves increasing the space between people.

- Educate members, leaders, employees
 - **Hygiene:** hand washing, cough etiquette (sneeze in your sleeve), self-quarantine if sick/ill while getting bed-rest, appropriate fluids, etc.
 - **Personal Protective Equipment:** protective respirator masks, surgical masks, latex gloves, gauze, scarves, etc.
 - **Vaccination:** for first responders and priority groups
- Consider pandemic flu in the development of continuity and ministry action plans
 - Alternative forms of greeting may be used: bowing, nodding, touching elbows
 - The preparation and serving of coffee/refreshments/meals may be modified
 - Disposable communion cups should be considered during a pandemic danger
 - Weddings and funerals may need to be altered in size or postponed
 - Short-term suspension of Sunday School and other church programs
 - Creative worship services may focus around smaller group gatherings, sharing sermons and prayers through other media such as web sites, radio, podcasts
- Know your organization’s role in community pandemic response plans
- Recommended precautions for individuals and the community
 - Wash hands, use cough etiquette
 - Create family preparedness plan and supply kit
 - Obtain annual vaccine
 - Lead healthy lifestyle
 - Educate self and family

Step 7: Prepare and Train Church Leaders

- Assign a member of the congregation to serve as the congregation’s disaster response coordinator. This person should be acquainted with local emergency management leadership, coordinating, and guiding the congregation through its preparation and response.
- Have a contingency plan in the event that the pastor becomes a victim of the disaster. The synod office may be of help. Contact the synod office by phone at 830-379-9900 or by e-mail at info@swtsynod.org.
- Prepare lay leaders as alternates to lead the worship services and teach church school if pastor/teachers are incapacitated.
- Hold first-aid and CPR classes at your church for adults and youth. Encourage ushers, youth leaders, teachers, and others to attend.
- Train ushers in case of emergency such as fire or heart attack.
- Train Sunday school and daycare staff for emergencies/disasters.
- Have a member trained in first aid and CPR at each church activity.
- Determine the special needs of people in your congregation (e.g., vision, hearing, physical, impairments, heart conditions, etc.) to help prepare for special evacuation procedures when disaster strikes. Survey members and programs to identify special concerns to deal with during and following a disaster.
- Develop a plan to check on members to assess needs after a disaster.

Communications

We will communicate our emergency plans with our membership in the following way:

In the event of a disaster we will communicate with members in the following way:

Step 8: Prepare the Congregation

- Help church members learn what to do—be calm, heed warnings, follow instructions of public safety/emergency management leaders, be safe, and know how to help each other.
- Communicate storm shelter areas
 - Post clear directions in the church: what to do and where to go in case of severe storm/tornado warning
 - Conduct a storm drill.
Idea: Process during the last hymn of worship to the place of shelter. Explain the leadership's concern for everyone. End with a prayer and dismissal.
- Make sure a working weather radio or battery-operated radio is accessible in the church (not locked in the church office after hours). Ensure that someone is listening to the radio during watches while church functions are in progress to give warning.
- Collect emergency/disaster-preparedness needs such as emergency lights, flashlights, first-aid kits, blankets.
- Designate a group to call shut-ins before a storm and to follow up afterward. In the event of an evacuation, this group could also call the local county emergency management office to tell them of those needing special transportation.
- Arrange for a first-aid class to be held at the church and encourage participation by youth and adults. Encourage youth leadership and those who teach to attend. Use the same strategy for CPR training.
- Create prayer and life phone trees of those who volunteer to pray and those who volunteer to give blood in an emergency or disaster.
- Know resources within your congregation and within your community; identify functions; know how to access them.

Step 9: Prepare to Resume Worship Services

- The Church ministers through prayers, Scripture reading, and the sacraments. Be prepared to resume worship services **immediately** even in temporary or damaged facilities.
- Know how you will publicize the fact that church services will be held. Many people will be listening to the radio; this may be the best method for getting the word out. Also publicize pastoral care.
- Determine a suitable alternative worship site, such as a school, and get an estimate of what it would cost to rent. If possible, get an informal arrangement that would allow your church to relocate quickly. This might be a reciprocal agreement with another church, or even a funeral home, to share a facility. This can benefit both parties in case of major damage or destruction.

Step 10: Prepare to Serve the Community

- Develop processes for raising funds for disaster response and for receiving funds from outside sources. Be sure to check with Thrivent Financial for Lutherans for fund raising ideas and matching funds possibilities.
- Arrange agreements to work with the Red Cross (www.redcross.org) and other emergency-management agencies. For information on working with Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response, go to www.lsss.org on the internet and choose the “Disaster Response” option under the “Our Ministries” menu for more information.
- Become a Red Cross Emergency Shelter. Before seeking to become a shelter, get the approval of the congregation council. The American Red Cross may use church buildings close to the disaster area as temporary shelters. Prior certification is required. Work with your local Red Cross chapter to meet requirements for a certified site (see www.redcross.org).
- Decide if the church can be used to house volunteers. Make the decision prior to a disaster. Plans should be made for minimizing the impact to local church programs. Teams must be totally self-sufficient with food, water, and bedding. Let the synod office and Lutheran Disaster Relief know of your willingness to house volunteer teams (see the contact information at the top of page 8).

- Mobilize a Community Interfaith/VOAD Response. Does your community have an Interfaith Disaster Response Committee? Does your congregation participate? If no such team or committee exists, call a meeting of religious leaders in a ministerial association or an already established interfaith group to discuss how the organizations can work together in a disaster. Lutheran Social Services Disaster Relief (phone: 512-450-1000) may be able to help organize this meeting. Through this group, along with other churches or religious organizations, develop a plan to reach out to the most vulnerable people in the community—elderly, single parents with children and those with special needs.

Federal, state, and voluntary agencies respond in various ways following a disaster. Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) committees coordinate the meeting of immediate needs through various disaster response organizations. Local religious leaders are encouraged to be actively involved with the VOAD. The VOAD, with help from religious leaders (pastors and lay), assists victims in registering with FEMA. This kind of support is especially critical for disaster victims to effectively manage the insurance or government forms.

- Develop a plan to receive, organize, and distribute food and other needed items including cleaning supplies, hygiene supplies, and baby supplies. (Rarely is clothing needed; usually all clothing needs are easily met locally.)
- Organize workers. Organize volunteer work crews to help in your area in times of disaster. Organize a church volunteer team to assist disaster victims outside your immediate area. See www.ldr.org for more information on volunteer teams.
- Work with Lutheran congregations or other neighboring churches to serve together in response to disaster. Contact the synod office at 830-379-9900 for assistance in coordinating and matching your efforts with known and anticipated needs.
- Identify the resources (including human resources) of the congregation. Update annually.

Coordinating with Others in Our Community

The following people from our community, neighborhood, and neighboring businesses will participate on our emergency planning team:

Step 11: Prepare with Distant Neighbors

Set up a companion congregation plan with other congregations in the synod or region. Yoking with a distant community can provide a conduit for spiritual, pastoral, and physical care to those who are in the relief or recovery phases of a disaster. Companion congregations may also assist one another in the ongoing development and review of their disaster preparedness plans.

- Establish partnerships with a congregation in a disaster-prone area and one in a relatively safe area.

- Designate contact persons in each congregation. The companion congregation may provide temporary housing during a disaster. It is also a source of volunteers and a link to other congregational, synodical, and churchwide ministries.

Step 12: Prepare to Review Annually

We will review and update this congregational Disaster Preparedness Plan in

_____.

Additional Preparedness Resources

Web Sites

- Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR). <http://www.ldr.org>
(the *Preparing for Disaster* booklet at <http://www.ldr.org/resources/PrepDisaster.pdf>
has considerable information on family and home disaster preparation as well as
congregational planning)
- Lutheran Social Services of the South. <http://www.lsss.org>
(Southwestern Texas Synod's local affiliate for Lutheran Disaster Response)
- Texas Interagency Interfaith Disaster Response. <http://www.tidr.org>
- Texas Division of Emergency Management. <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/pages>
- Church Pandemic Resources. <http://www.churchpandemicresources.ca>
(a web site of the Mennonite Church of Canada with considerable useful information)
- United States Government Pandemic Flu Web Site. <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>
(general information, planning and preparation checklists, current activity)
- United States Homeland Security Emergency Preparedness. <http://www.ready.gov>
(information on family, home, and business preparation for a disaster)
- Church World Service Emergency Response Program. <http://www.cwserp.org/congregations>
(additional disaster preparedness resources and links)

Books

- Making Sense Out of Sorrow: A Journey of Faith* by Foster R. McCurley, Alan G. Weitzman. Trinity Press International 1995.
- Act of God/Active God: Recovering from Natural Disasters* by Gary L. Harbaugh. Fortress Press 2001.
- Congregational Trauma: Caring, Coping, and Learning* by Jill M. Hudson. Alban Institute 1998.
- When God Speaks through Change: Preaching in Times of Congregational Transition* by Craig A. Satterlee. Alban Institute 2005.

Workshops

- Texas Interagency Interfaith Disaster Response (TIDR). <http://www.tidr.org/resources.php>
(TIDR offers workshops and appointments designed to help congregations complete
disaster preparedness plans)