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**To: Susquehanna Conference**  
**From: Doug Hoy**  
**Date: Monday, August 17, 2020**  
**Subject: DISASTER RESPONSE MINISTRY**

The Susquehanna Conference is one of three Pennsylvania Conferences of the United Methodist Church with a mission emphasis that encourages volunteers to grow spiritually as they perform works of mercy. The focus of the Disaster Response Ministry (DRM) is to provide a relief and response capability to help alleviate suffering as the result of disaster in communities within the Conference, across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, throughout the nation, and internationally.

The Susquehanna Conference shares in a partnership with United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to provide services when disasters overwhelm a community's ability to recover on its own.

Our mission, is grounded in the teaching of Jesus Christ, to alleviate human suffering with open minds and hearts to all people. By Discipline, UMCOR's purpose is to: Provide immediate relief of human need and suffering; Work cooperatively with the conference and others in disaster response; Initiate printed, audiovisual, electronic, and other resources; and to Assist and train conference coordinators.

Our goal is to provide a response that addresses the physical, social, spiritual and emotional needs of individuals and families through caring ministries. The Conference embraces UMCOR's values for disaster ministry by: Affirming the dignity and worth of persons by involving them in their own recovery, enabling those affected by disasters to take responsibility for relief and recovery work; Honoring cultural differences; Delivering aid to people without regard to race, religion, politics, or gender; Seeking to work with other religious and secular organizations, wherever possible, to pool resources and avoid duplicating efforts; Avoiding the tying the promise of its relief and development activity to any religious or political viewpoint; and, Welcoming the good efforts of countless volunteers, individuals and churches who support us through gifts, prayers and service.

As a Conference ministry, we offer the following opportunities, training, and assistance.

## **1. Disaster Response Planning**

- a. The DRM encourages every church and/or charge to develop a disaster response plan that specifically addresses its needs during anticipated disasters.
  - b. A ministry representative will walk with you through the assessment of your needs and development of a plan that will enable you and your congregation to prepare and train for disasters, mobilize your people and resources when they are needed, and respond as efficiently and effectively as possible when they occur.
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## 2. Disaster Response Training

- a. The DRM provides numerous training opportunities through classroom instruction, hand-on experiences, and virtual learning for individuals and groups, to support its ministry and mission, including:
  - i. Individual Training
    1. Early Response Team (ERT)
      - a. Initial
      - b. Advanced/Re-certification
    2. Spiritual/Emotional Care
    3. First Aid and CPR
  - ii. Group/Team Training
    1. Conference Disaster Response Planning
    2. Connecting Neighbors
    3. Spiritual/Emotional Care
    4. Active Shooter
    5. Site Safety
    6. Equipment Operations

## 3. Disaster Relief and Resources

- a. Along with all United Methodist communities, the DRM has the “response-ability” to carry out our faith in meaningful ways in accordance with scripture. To that end, the ministry is poised to provide practical, proactive support when disasters strike. That support comes through its connectional relationships with local congregations, UMCOR, other Annual Conferences, faith-based and non-profit organizations, businesses, and government agencies at the local, state, and federal levels.
    - i. Recently, the DRM collaborated with FEMA, Mission Central, and a local disaster response non-profit organization to secure and deliver 800 gallons of hand sanitizer, nearly 60,000 face coverings, and N95 masks to churches and camping/retreat centers throughout the Conference.
  - b. Those relationships also enable the ministry to train and equip Early Response Teams (ERT) and Volunteers in Mission (VIM) to respond to areas affected by a disaster and provide assistance with clean-up, volunteer coordination, construction management, donations management, fiscal management, emotional / spiritual care, casework / case management, and administration/information management.
    - i. In 2019, the DRM and the Conference VIM were able to support a disaster response to the Upper New York Conference and provide clean-up and home repair assistance.
  - c. Furthermore, the ministry is capable of providing resources to allow for these tasks to be accomplished.
    - i. The Conference currently supports nine Disaster Response and VIM response trailers that are fully equipped with tools and equipment. They are staged throughout each of the seven Districts to allow for a rapid response, when needed.
  - d. Additionally, the ministry can offer financial assistance, through the Disaster Response Ministry Advance (#8055) and UMCOR Solidarity grants, to offset the costs associated with responding to a disaster.
    - i. In 2018 and 2019, the ministry provided financial assistance to churches and communities throughout the Conference that were affected by flooding, including:
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1. Securing an UMCOR grant that was used to provide temporary housing, drinking water, medical supplies, construction/volunteer management, and home repairs for victims affected by flooding in Susquehanna County.
2. Providing grants to three churches to offset the cost of flood repairs to their buildings.

#### 4. Weekly Resourcing

- a. The DRM recognizes that the times we are living in are very fluid and can change at the drop of a hat. And, with a plethora of information available, it can become very confusing. We also understand that time is valuable and you may not always have enough of it to spend hours searching for the information you need. So, in an effort to resource pastors, trustees, and congregations, the DRM will be providing pastors, trustees and congregations, with an informational one-stop shopping opportunity where they can find information on topics including COVID-19 state and federal updates, CARES rent and mortgage relief programs, PPP webinars, Food and nutrition assistance programs, spiritual and emotional welfare information, and much more.
- b. Please visit the Conference Disaster Response Ministry Weekly Resource page by clicking [here](#), selecting the Disaster Response tab, and then choosing “Weekly Resources.”

Disasters come in many shapes, sizes, and causes. When they occur, both physical and spiritual devastation result. It places victims in situations where they may be unable to see the hope and reassurance of God’s promises. And, in the midst of these situations, the mission of the Disaster Response Ministry is to provide that hope and encouragement through relief and restoration efforts.

When Noah was asked to build an Ark, he was provided with the tools to complete the task. Moses was summoned to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and equipped by God to do the job. And, before Jesus sent the disciples out two by two, He gave them the training they needed to share the word of God.

Likewise, if we prayerfully seek God’s call to ministry and desire to provide hope and restoration in times of disaster, He will provide us with the tools we need. We can be assured He will bless us abundantly with all we need to “abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

If you would like more information about the Disaster Response Ministry, please reach out to Doug Hoy, the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator. And, if you would like to partner with the ministry with financial support, please do so by sending your gifts to the Conference office with a note indicating it is for the Disaster Response Ministry Advance (#8055.)