

A Day in the Life with Disaster Planning Preparedness for the Diocese of Easton

Walking into Emergency Planning meetings here in Worcester County, whether in Snow Hill or Ocean City, Faith-Based Organizations are welcomed with a warm smile and a sense of enthusiasm. Around the table are gathered First Responders from the Public Sector and representatives from the Private Sector as well. The discussions are intense and well structured. These folks we are privileged to sit with are paid by their employers daily to do their jobs and if disaster strikes, they must be accountable and have well thought-out plans. The experiences of September 11, Katrina, and other disasters have taught a tremendous amount in the last 11 years about what works well and where the short comings have been.

When Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health invited the entire Diocese of Easton to begin training back in 2010, there was a great deal of education required to figure how we fit into the big picture. Now two years later, it makes sense to re-emphasize that this is all about the training, the network and what was spoken early in the dialogue;

“Being Christ’s Hands.....”

We are not first responder,s although some people who are parishioners might actually be in that role as EMS, doctors, nurses, firemen, policemen, etc. We are the church. In times of disaster, the community, including our own parish families, will show up asking for help. How will we respond?

Saturday, October 27th, 2012

It is 10:00 am and the Disaster Preparedness Task Group for our diocese has just dialed into a conference phone call to update one another about what we see going on throughout the diocese. Hurricane Sandy is heading up the coast, a cold front is approaching and meteorological experts are issuing dire warnings. (As I write this on the afternoon of our call, I can only prepare... and pray.)

From Worcester County, I have witnessed St. Paul’s by-the-Sea reaching out to the parish family with an email to explain services on Sunday being cancelled to prevent people from coming into town and to also encourage each of us to prepare for the storm. In the email, a communication is attached from the Town of Ocean City providing further details about precautionary measures the town is taking and advising residents and visitors to be aware of preventative measures and to prepare accordingly.

I place a phone call to our rector, the Rev. David Dingwall. We speak about our parish community, especially those served by Shepherd’s Crook and N.O.E.L. He briefs me on the work our parish sexton is doing directly and indirectly with those local residents and how the plan for the Town of Ocean City will provide a safety net in an emergency for them as well. I conclude the call realizing that the parish has the “buy in” that Johns Hopkins and our bishop desires in preparing to respond to potential disasters.

Meanwhile, our 10:00 am task group conference call ends with further action plans for the week; a post-storm conference call, a phone tree to reach out to parishes across the diocese to make sure they are alright, and plans for a follow-up meeting at Bray House later this fall. We further appreciate the importance to better use social media to remind others of the resources available for training, etc.

What is your vision for mission and ministry in the Diocese of Easton? Where is God calling you to be today? As many know, there is truly an abundance of ways our Lord and Savior shows where we can be of service; Jesus is in our midst and we are the Hands of Christ. Thank you, Lord.

*Rodney Dean is active in the Disaster Preparedness team,
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