

The Disaster Preparedness Planning Program of the Diocese of Easton

In the event of a disaster, who will care for our parishioners, who will check on our shut-ins, how will we reach out to our community, how can we protect our historical parish records and our artifacts? Will we merely *react* to a community disaster or will we be prepared to begin a *thoughtful, strategic response*?

The objective of Disaster Preparedness Planning in the Diocese of Easton is to develop, in cooperation with the county health departments, a comprehensive community disaster plan. The program is designed to teach basic concepts and skills in disaster planning to our clergy and lay leaders. The goal is to enhance the preparedness and response capacity of our communities.

This is accomplished by educating each parish with information on why planning is important; how they can contribute to effective preparedness, response and recovery; who will serve critical disaster leadership roles in the parish; and which individuals, organizations and agencies in the community are important targets for planning and preparedness partnerships. The Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health Preparedness has trained some of our parishioners and stands ready to assist us in developing specific plans.

Our parishes are sanctuaries of hope through Christ's love. In times of disaster, people turn to the church. We are called to provide practical aid to those in need. Are you prepared to share the gift of your commercial kitchen, showers and gathering space? Can Stephen Ministers and trained caregivers be ready to reach out?

The plan includes preparation for:

- All hazards: severe weather, pandemics, terrorism
- Increased mental health and spiritual needs: 8 out of 10 people will have psychological trauma
- Offering Psychological First Aid (PFA) Training
- Taking care of vulnerable people: children, seniors, shut-ins, those with special needs
- Analyzing our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)
- Doing a time and talent survey
- Identifying disaster leadership roles based on the Federal "Incident Command System"
- Developing effective, reliable communication
- Preparing family disaster kits: water, non-perishable foods, can openers, medicines, etc.
- Protecting our financial, legal and insurance records for parishes and families
- Learning skills for property protection: security, valuables, pictures, computers/information

The Disaster Preparedness Planning Committee volunteers are prepared to continue assisting parishes in developing their disaster plans. The parishes of each county will be working in cooperation with their local health department. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health will provide technical assistance in writing the plans. Questions should be directed to committee chair, Suzanne Moore at moores@ccinonline.com.

Good stewardship is being ready, willing and able to respond to a disaster. We are blessed with many gifts and resources. Knowing how to use and share them enables us to be Christ's hands and hearts in the world.