

St. MAM Disaster Preparedness Meeting Notes

February 5, 2009

Summary of Meeting:

Thanks to those who participated yesterday, including Jennifer Osborne representing City Councilman Ken Fleming's office. We had a very informative discussion about what it means to become a V.O.A.D. (Volunteer Organization Active in Disaster) and we also took time to hear from our church representatives concerning their responses to the Ice Storm power outage. Several of our member churches provided shelter during the outage and they shared with us about their approach. We asked if they would also document not only what they did during the power outage, how they set up their shelter, but in their follow-up what they will be doing to be better prepared should the same occur again. Christ Church Methodist and Harvey Browne Presbyterian will be documenting both for their own and our benefit. We appreciate their efforts in this regard.

Becoming a V.O.A.D. – Volunteer Organization Active in Disaster

Presentation by Jim Garrett

1. Jim began by reminding us that disasters generally have both follow-up work as well as the immediate response (i.e. debris removal; elderly requiring assistance with down trees and limbs; people needing financial assistance due to having to unexpectedly pay for motel rooms in order to survive the outage).
2. VOAD History/Facts:
 - A. Born in 1970's.
 - B. Faith-based and non-governmental in its development (although it partners with government in resourcing).
 - C. Started at national level.
 - D. Works best through non-profits already existent in the communities.
 - E. Kentucky Council of Churches is affiliated with VOAD.
 - F. A "Ministry of Hospitality" and "Pastoral Care"; responding with resources available.
3. WHY?
 - A. There is an "INCIDENT" (i.e. power outage, tornado, flood, earthquake, train wreck and contamination, etc.).

B. The “Incident” creates a DISRUPTION to our lives/routine.

4. **THREE STEPS/PHASES:**

A. **RESPONSE PHASE** (intended to stabilize life; checking on neighbors, shelters, etc.).

B. **RELIEF PHASE** (on-going; food, shelter, debris clean-up).

C. **RECOVERY PHASE** (the conscience to see it through with the affected and their struggles; rebuilding homes; getting back to normal; basically the role of the faith-based...government has its role too but it often is responding to those within the community, utilizing existing resources, and facilitating rather than imposing their resources; depending on the nature of the “Incident”, this RECOVERY PHASE can last from several months to several years...i.e. Katrina recovery has a 25 year Recovery Plan).

5. **TWO TASKS:**

A. **PREPARATION**

*As always, there is a salient need to teach people to be prepared for Disaster (i.e. 3 days of food, flashlights, lanterns, generators, communication networks). ANTICIPATE...ANTICIPATE...ANTICIPATE.

B. **MITIGATION**

*Anticipate the more obvious Dangers/Concerns: ***“Who are the most vulnerable? How can we advocate for them before the need hits?”***

(i.e. Harvey Browne Presbyterian conducted an educational session following the '08 fall power outage that was related to “Disaster Prep”).

*EMERGENCY OPERATION PLANS

A. Metro Government has an exhaustive plan on their Website.

B. City of St. Matthews has a plan; not on their Website.

***In these disaster plans, it is in the appendices/indexes that you find the actual resource contacts that are referred to as an ESF or Emergency Support Functions (i.e. VOADs) that will be utilized to access help/support and coordinate responses. This is where a local community VOAD is so effective (i.e. Dare to Care pushes food through VOADs when the need arises; funds for disaster relief can be channeled through VOADs as structured by bylaws, treasury, etc.). A V.O.A.D. would fall under an ESF6 that connects government and faith-based disaster responses.**

6. **CRITICAL QUESTION:** Where in the plan do we lodge in? **Can you as an organization/church be a SUPPORT versus a HINDERANCE?** Good intentions can become a burden if the shelter, for example, is ill-equipped, unprepared, and overrun thus creating more problems for the local authorities, and potentially creating a backlash among parish/church members who then may oppose such efforts in the future.
7. **DISASTER = MINISTRY OF INCONVENIENCE (ALWAYS A DISRUPTION).**
8. Red Cross: Works with churches; no longer takes over; they expect a church to provide volunteers and help to manage the site.
9. **ANIMALS/PETS: Many elderly will not leave their pets and consequently, shelters must take into consideration how they will provide for the pets of those requiring shelter (i.e. Harvey Browne allowed pets to be brought into the church).**
10. **Why VOAD?**
 - A. **"All disasters start locally and end locally."** City government may provide help on some level, depending on the "disruption." State government will only come in later, depending on the severity. Federal governmental assistance will likely be delayed at best and again, depending on the severity. Once determined that assistance is required, it may be several days before actual help is on the ground.
 - B. **Local folks determine the NEEDS & FOLLOW-UP. "Know your capacities."**
11. **4 C's that make our work effective:**
 - A. **Communicate.**
 - B. **Collaborate.**
 - C. **Coordinate.**
 - D. **Cooperate.**
12. Ideally, who should be at the table:
 - A. Faith-based Community (begins here).
 - B. Local Government, Police, Fire Dept., Business Association.
13. **V.O.A.D. is not a Response Organization; it is a RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION (not top down, dictating to churches or groups, rather it is facilitative, coordinating, communicating, collaborative, and promoting cooperation).**

14. Other V.O.A.D. facts:

- A. State Level VOAD meets 4 times per year (conferences and training available); not required but about promoting communication and coordination.
- B. Locally, a VOAD can meet as often as thought necessary.
- C. IMPORTANT: Know one another and build relationships for resourcing if and when a disaster should come.
- D. **“It’s all about bringing resources to bear upon the disaster.”**
- E. A local V.O.A.D. has an annual fee of \$15 (pays for postage and mailing of information).

NEXT STEPS:

1. **Jim Garrett and Dan Lane were charged with laying out a plan or blueprint of sorts in moving forward with establishing a local V.O.A.D.; this will include the purpose and subject matter for subsequent meetings for those interested parties and churches.**
2. **Schedule and promote by email the next group meeting at which time we will begin to flesh out the plan and move forward.**
3. **Document our approach as there is growing interest from Metro Government, City Councilpersons, and other Community Ministries to duplicate what we are developing in St. Matthews.**

CLOSING THOUGHTS:

We began this journey last fall following the power outage caused throughout our community by the powerful straight winds. We have been so fortunate to have among those who showed up for the initial meeting: an expert in disaster preparedness (Jim Garrett) and a retired meteorologist (Marilyn Sholz). Marilyn make the point that, in her opinion, we can expect similar weather problems repeatedly in going forward (not good news). Jim brings the kind of experience and knowledge related to Disaster Preparedness that propels us forward; we’re grateful for his contributions and the time investment he is making. It seems that what we are doing now will not only have an impact on our community for the greater good, in preparing to respond when the “disruption” or “incident” should occur, but it may well afford a model for others to guide them in doing the same for their communities.

Who can say what these efforts may mean? Will these efforts result in improved coordination and communication? I think so. Will these efforts

strengthen our relations as a community in working side by side? I think so. Will these efforts alleviate some suffering and disruption to those neighbors next door or down the street from our churches? I think so. Will these efforts actually result in saving lives?

We hope that “disasters” will never occur. But I’m reminded of Jim’s definition of disaster: **An “incident”, a “disruption”, and a Ministry of Inconvenience.** Yes, the disruption might be something mild, or it might be something of more severe inconvenience, but it could also be something we do not care to anticipate simply because we do not want to entertain the immeasurable tragedy of certain scenarios.

Our meetings will be open to anyone, however, please email if you plan to attend so that we can plan adequately for space. Thank you.

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