

# **The Conference Plan for Disaster Preparedness and Response**

## **The Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church**

**(Revised July 14, 2005)**

### **Statement of Purpose**

A disaster is any event (i.e. hurricane, tornado, toxic spills, etc.) that displaces a number of families for any extended period of time. Because of their nature, disasters bring about human suffering and present our communities with needs that are best met through the local church.

But, because of limitations of the resources available to the local church (i.e. volunteers, money, expertise, etc.) there is a need for the connectional system to support and under gird these efforts to alleviate human suffering. With this in mind the Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is setting up a structure that will facilitate local churches in ministry to persons in need as a result of a disaster.

Our purpose being:

- To provide immediate relief of acute human need and to respond to the suffering of persons in our communities caused by natural, ecological and civil disaster.
- To work cooperatively with the appropriate conference units, ecumenical bodies, and interdenominational agencies in the identification of, advocacy for, and assistance with ministries for disaster response.
- To work cooperatively with United Methodist Communications in promotion of the One Great Hour of Sharing offering and the Florida Annual Conference Disaster Response offering.
- To initiate printed, audiovisual, electronic, and other resources to interpret, support, and communicate with conferences and churches concerning appeal for help and information related to ministry for disaster response.
- To assist and train district coordinators and local church disaster coordinators to address emerging and ongoing issues related to disaster relief.

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one  
of the least of these friends of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40 (modified)

## **General Structure**

The Annual Conference Disaster Response Leadership Team will assist in the implementation of the Conference Plan for Disaster Preparedness and Response to alleviate human suffering due to disasters.

This team is composed of:

- Conference Disaster Response Administrative Team
- Bishop, District Superintendents and extended Cabinet members
- District Disaster Coordinators
- Local Church Disaster Coordinators
- Storm Recovery staff

The Conference Plan for Disaster Preparedness and Response defines the responsibilities of the local church, the district and the conference. It also includes an overall plan of ministry towards those who are affected by a disaster, setting out the development and implementation of a strong mitigation strategy.

A copy of the plan is to be sent to every local church, annually, so that they might know that this is a vital and ongoing ministry of the Conference. This plan must be readily available via a web site.

## **What are our responsibilities in disaster?**

### **Preparation Phase:**

**(Before hurricane season)**

#### **Local Church Responsibilities:**

- Identify a Disaster Coordinator and a Committee to develop a Preparation and Response Plan. Include in the plan, both the protection of people and buildings and your ability to offer ministry to the community (shelter, emergency feeding, and distribution site).
- Identify and develop a plan to care for vulnerable members of your congregation.
- Compile a list of volunteers to implement the Disaster Plan

- Designate a person to serve in the local VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters), if possible.
- Communicate with the District Coordinator; inform him/her of the scope of your plans and the availability of your church to help in a disaster that might occur outside of their local community.
- Maintain a contact list of phone numbers and email addresses for Conference Disaster Team members
- Encourage response to the Bishop's appeals regarding disaster relief (aid to other conferences, supplies, collections, food drives, etc.)
- Develop contacts with local relief agencies (County Emergency Management, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Faith Based Groups, etc.) through participation in the local VOAD.
- Determine how to best secure the church buildings and parsonage to mitigate damage.
- Determine if your church wants to sponsor an Early Response Team. Plan, train and equip the group.
- Inform district and conference coordinators that you have an Early Response Team

### **District Responsibilities**

- District Coordinator holds trainings for church Coordinators and committees.
- District Superintendent receives training and prepares communications procedures between clergy, church coordinators, and Bishop; and becomes informed about evacuation areas and special needs of the district.

### **Conference Responsibilities**

- Prepare and train conference and district disaster response coordinators.
- Prepare and train conference staff and Cabinet
- Insure that relationships with other conferences and UMCOR are clearly defined
- Identify locations for supply depots, inventory and store equipment, update forms and procedures as necessary.
- Identify ways to mitigate damage.

### **Warning Phase**

*(72 hours prior to hurricane)*

### **Local Church Responsibilities**

- If an approved Red Cross shelter, initiate shelter procedures as determined by the Red Cross
- Institute your preparation and response plan, including but not limited to:
  - Prepare for and encourage church members to prepare for at least three days without assistance.

- Check in with and assist identified vulnerable members such as elderly, shut-ins, disabled, single parents, undocumented populations
- Back up computers, protect records, secure church buildings and parsonage
- Secure families of pastor, staff and vulnerable members.

### **District Responsibilities**

- District Superintendent secures family; District Trustees secure office and parsonage.
- District Superintendent makes contact with clergy to determine who is evacuating and who is not, ensure continuity of communications and support.
- District Superintendent determines which churches are the most vulnerable
- District Coordinator confirms communications channels with conference and district coordinators.
- District Coordinator gears up response plans, dependent upon the direction of the hurricane.

### **Conference Responsibilities**

- Conference Coordinator, Storm Recovery Director, DCM make contact with District Superintendents, District Coordinators.
- Secure families and homes depending on direction of hurricane.
- If conference offices are vulnerable, then institute plan for conference offices, securing records, data, and building.
- Bishop makes contact with all District Superintendents to ensure continuity of communications and support.
- Supply Depot and warehouses gear up.

### **Emergency Phase**

(Length to be determined by restoration of vital services)

### **Church Responsibilities**

- All members of Disaster Team see to the needs of family first.
- Assess church and parsonage damage.
- Pastor reports in to District Superintendent regarding (1) safety of pastor and family, (2) damage to buildings, parsonage, and (3) ministry involvement - feeding, sheltering, work teams, etc. This is a redundant system with the D.S.'s role below.
- Pastor and/or Church Disaster Response Coordinator communicates with District Coordinator same information.
- Identify someone to take conference personnel on an assessment of the disaster area.

## **District Responsibilities**

- D.S. and staff ensure security and safety of family first.
- D.S. makes contact with each clergy and as soon as is feasible, checks each church site in affected area, and reports to Bishop and DCM
- District Coordinator is also in close contact with D.S., makes contact with every affected church and pastor, and reports to Conference Coordinator. The District Coordinator is the key between conference and local communications regarding ice, food, water, and early response teams.
- Any current Storm Recovery 2004 case management supervisors/staff assist where needed.

## **Conference Responsibilities**

- Bishop contacts UMCOR if he has not already done so during Warning phase.
- Conference Coordinator and Storm Recovery Director determine routes for shipment, coordinate district relationships.
- DCM backs up Bishop, conference coordinator and Storm Recovery Director.
- Conference 800# receives phone calls from throughout conference and country. Coordinates needs with offers of assistance, directing them to areas where most needed.
- Supply Depot and warehouses begin to receive/send supplies coordinated through Storm Recovery Center.

## **Relief Phase**

(10 times the length of Emergency Phase)

## **Church Responsibilities**

- Ensure that communication links with the District Superintendent and District Coordinator have been established.
- If buildings are damaged, file a claim.
- Make contact with local emergency management personnel (FEMA, EOC, VOAD, etc.).
- Pastor and Local Church team implement Disaster Response Plan of your church.
- Assess needs of your members – check on welfare of members of your congregation, following your plan.
- Concentrate on meeting BASIC needs and safety/security – food, water, and temporary shelter, drying-in of homes.
- Organize clean-up crews to go into neighborhoods. Prepare to receive crews that may show up to help.
- Keep strict and separate accounting of disaster funding. Document spending

## **District Responsibilities**

- District churches not in disaster area are keys to support of churches that have been affected. Send teams and supplies as directed by district coordinator and site coordinators. Do not assume that you know what people need. Determine your availability to house volunteers and assist longer term. In later relief stage, send “Information and Referral” teams.
- District Coordinator is full-time, coordinating teams and supplies, identifying special needs, in coordination with Storm Recovery Center.
- D.S. seeks out clergy needing R&R.
- In cooperation with local VOADs, determine areas that need Information and Referral Teams. Send out teams for assessment/ministry contact.

### **Conference Responsibilities**

- Conference Coordinator and Storm Recovery Director are on daily conference calls with NVOAD, and statewide with FEMA, Red Cross, CWS, and VOADs in series of meeting that evaluate the situation and determine overall needs. Each organization receives info from the ground. Work is coordinated between the organizations from these “meetings”.
- Storm Recovery toll-free number is handled by volunteers, managing hundreds of calls daily from teams and sites throughout conference.
- Early on, teams from districts CLOSEST to affected districts need to mobilize and be directed through the conference 800#. Teams from further away, need to coordinate through 800# also, but stage deliveries depending on fuel supply in the state.
- Bishop and Council on Finance and Administration determine need and timing for a conference-wide appeal.
- Churches support with Sunday offerings,
- Madison Supply Depot and Jacksonville warehouse swing into action as transfer point for out of state supplies.
- Consultation begins with UMCOR on strategy for assistance and coordination from UMCOR and other conferences.
- Shade and Fresh Water Retreats begin for clergy, families, staff that need R&R.

### **Long Term Recovery Phase**

(10 times the number of days of relief)

### **Church Responsibilities**

- In the disaster area, seek out volunteers to be trained as case managers and case manager assistants.
- Refer persons in need to Long Term Recovery organization for case management
- Determine level of involvement for church with Long Term Recovery organization in your county. Examine if your church will develop a case management ministry, house volunteers, store building supplies, and provide office space.
- If located out of the disaster area, continue to send teams to assist with rebuilding.
- Keep strict and separate accounting of funding received. Document spending.

## **District Responsibilities**

- District Coordinator's work becomes increasingly focused on mitigation and preparation for the next season.
- District may identify staff to work long term rebuilding through the Long Term Recovery organizations in the district.
- D.S. continues to support and refer clergy and families to Shade and Fresh Water retreats.

## **Conference Responsibilities**

- Core staff is established to carry out recovery process and work in the disaster areas.
- Shade and Fresh Water Retreats continue.
- Conference manages distribution of offering, UMCOR grants, and other funds received.
- Conference continues to interpret to churches that the recovery continues for a long time. Provides publicity.

## **Additional Information for Expanded Training**

### **Local church**

The local United Methodist Church is the point of contact for all United Methodist assistance in a disaster. The Conference can assist, but will not take over this role.

Churches will be working with the Florida Annual Conference Disaster Response Team and not directly with UMCOR (United Methodist Committee On Relief). UMCOR is a resource agency of the general church for the local "owners" of the disaster.

The Annual Conference will do all it can to make sure its resources and that of the General Church are available. No one expects persons in the local church to know everything about disaster relief, nor does the Conference expect the local congregation to exhaust its resources in relief.

It is also important to note that a disaster may take a great deal of time to resolve. This means that the local church must recognize its limitations in being able to respond.

## **Early Preparation**

The local church Board of Trustees should annually review insurance coverage and report any changes in property such as additions or deletions to the conference office.

The Board of Trustees should make an annual inventory of church property and contents and provide a safe repository of valuable records. Property and content inventories are backed-up best by narrated video recordings of each room.

A Disaster Relief Coordinator for the Local Church must be selected and trained.

The Board of Trustees, in conjunction with the Local Church Disaster Relief Coordinator and the Pastor, need to consider the use of the facility as a potential resource for a disaster situation. Training is available from the Conference to help churches effectively evaluate their resources and develop an effective plan to respond to needs created by a disaster.

The local pastor, staff, administrative council, and trustees must have a plan of membership care ready to activate in a disaster. This includes help for the elderly, singles, singles with children, mobile home communities, flood zone evacuees, people with disabilities, and street people. You may even consider a ministry to pets.

Get as many people as possible to register with the church where they will be staying if evacuated. Often relatives and friends will call the church to try and find out where people are and how they are doing. This will update your church database.

Back up all church computers and secure information! A sub directory on your website is a great place to store it.

If a church wishes to become a shelter or work as a service center during a disaster, a written agreement between the American Red Cross and the local church is required. If the church contracts with the Red Cross, a signed copy of this agreement is to sent to the Risk Management Department in the conference office. With an agreement, the American Red Cross covers the liability and damage that might occur in relation to operating the shelter and also provides staff to run the operation.

## **After Disaster Strikes**

- Assess damage to the church facilities and report to the District Office, and begin a membership head count to be sure all are secure.
- Implement the Church Disaster Plan. Your District Superintendent will work with the church and the District Disaster Coordinator on coordinating fund requests through the Conference office.
- Funding: The Bishop will work with the District Superintendents and the Conference Disaster Response Team to make sure that any funding given to a local church for a specific disaster should be kept separate from other church funds and should be accountable to the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team. If the local church is not directly affected by the disaster, any money received should be forwarded to the district. And at the closure of a disaster, those funds, their accountability, and the closure form should be immediately forwarded to the District office; or if the funds are surplus funds from an UMCOR request, those funds must be returned to the Conference office for processing. All funds must be accounted for to the satisfaction of the District, the Conference and the Conference Disaster Response Team.

## **Local Church Disaster Response Coordinator**

It is important for you to know that this task is a team effort! That by working with the District Coordinator, the Conference Disaster Coordinator, your pastor, lay leader, and church officials, many of the connections can be easily made.

There are resources for you in all of these areas. You are the point person or a go-to person when a disaster strikes. Quickly team with your pastor and District Disaster Coordinator.

### **Early Preparation**

Work with Pastor and Trustees in developing a disaster response plan.

Review the Training Slides at <http://www.amenradio.org>

Develop a Disaster Response Committee to help the Pastor and Trustees to make an assessment of special needs populations within the community (i.e. the elderly, poor, unemployed, immigrants, disabled, shut-ins, children, etc.), persons often most vulnerable in a disaster.

Based on the Disaster Plan, compile a list of persons willing to volunteer to implement the Disaster Plan (i.e. help serve food, do cleanups, provide transportation, child care, reconstruction, organize support groups, etc.)

Designate a person to serve in the local VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters), if possible.

Keep the plans updated and apprise the congregation of those plans.

Communicate with the District Disaster Coordinator and inform them of the scope of the church plans and the churches availability to help in a disaster that might occur outside of their local community.

Encourage the church's participation in One Great Hour of Sharing and other special advances for the purpose of disaster relief.

Establish communication with the District Disaster Coordinator and maintain a list of phone numbers to be used to connect with the appropriate Conference Disaster Response Team members.

Encourage response to the Bishop's appeals regarding disaster relief (aid to other conferences, supplies brought to Annual Conference, food drives, etc.)

Develop contacts with the local relief agencies (County Emergency Management, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Faith Based Groups, etc.) through participation in the local VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters).

If there is no local VOAD, then you can talk with the Conference Disaster Coordinator about either helping set up a local VOAD or working with some other local group. As a conference we encourage working with the VOAD if at all possible. (VOAD - Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters).

Become familiar with existing community service agencies. (Do they have a plan to help the needy in a disaster as an extension of their normal services?)

Develop an Assessment Team and allow Conference Trainers to teach this team how to effectively do assessment work following a disaster.

## **After Disaster Strikes**

Assess any injury in your own household; they are always your first responsibility.

Establish communication links with the District Disaster Coordinator.

Call together your Local Church Response Team, mentioned above.

Work with the Pastor and your Local Response team in implementing the Disaster Response Plan of your local church.

Activate the Assessment team.

Your District Superintendent will work with the church and the District Disaster Coordinator on coordinating fund requests through the Conference Disaster Coordinator and the Conference Disaster Response Team.

### **WATCH THE FUNDING!**

The Bishop will work with the District Superintendent and the Disaster Response Team to make sure that any funding given to a local church for a specific disaster should be kept separate from other church funds.

It must be accountable to the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team! If the local church is not directly affected by the disaster, any money received should be forwarded to the district.

And at the closure of a disaster, those funds, their accountability, and the closure form should be immediately forwarded to the District office; or if the funds are surplus funds from an UMCOR request, those funds must be returned to the Conference office for processing.

All funds must be accounted for to the satisfaction of the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team.

## **During Recovery**

Using Assessment Teams' findings, work with individuals in the community to find avenues of assistance.

Work with the local VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters) to find and assist persons in need (this may mean providing volunteers, taking food or supplies to persons in need, or using any other volunteer program the church can or has developed)

## **Clergy Responsibilities**

Encouraging the development of a local church disaster plan is the responsibility of all clergy under appointment in the Florida Annual Conference. Clergy are an important resource in recommending avenues for relieving human suffering due to disasters, as well as recognizing needs for training that will assist their local church disaster representative.

Clergy are ultimately responsible for the church to which they are appointed.

(Discipline 331.3a,b,c,d )

## Early Preparation

Work with local church Trustees to review insurance policies on church properties. Flood insurance requires a separate policy and this coverage is necessary in base flood plain areas. Also, to make sure that church properties (including parsonage) have some oversight from the trustees to make needed repairs.

**COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT IF YOU MUST EVACUATE. GIVE THEM AN ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER OF THE PLACE WHERE YOU WILL BE STAYING.**

Work with your Disaster Relief Coordinator and your Trustees (or your church Disaster Response Team) to inventory facilities to see how they could be used in an emergency.

Help identify interests, skills, and talents of persons within the congregation. Ask them of their willingness to volunteer in the event of disaster. Support your Disaster Coordinator in recruiting them for early training.

Help identify special need populations in the community who might require extra assistance. (Are there large populations of unemployed, poor, elderly, refugees and immigrants?)

Become familiar with Church and Conference Disaster Response Plans.

Support the Disaster Coordinator in coordinating One Great Hour of Sharing and other special disaster appeals.

## After Disaster Strikes

See to the needs of your family first. Do not abandon them for the sake of the parish. No matter what your level of involvement in disaster response, you will not be effective if you are not certain of the safety of your own household. What you do for them will be an example for others to follow with regard to their loved ones.

Work with Trustees to assess church and parsonage damage and to make sure any damage is reported to the District Office. Follow any instructions they may have regarding the damage.

When a disaster occurs in your community, the church Disaster Coordinator should contact the Pastor and other persons who have leadership roles in the church disaster plan and then, as a result of that discussion, contact the District Superintendent and/or the District Disaster Coordinator with plans for response.

Check on the welfare of members of your congregation, if possible and safe to do so. If your Disaster Relief Coordinator has developed an Assessment Team, they will assist you in making inquiries about the welfare of your membership. Also, volunteers from nearby congregations might be available to do an every member visitation on your behalf. Contact the District and/or Conference Disaster Coordinator. Be prepared to take Conference leadership personnel on an assessment tour of the disaster area.

See if your congregation can provide some early assistance to relief workers or victims. Organize cleanup crews to be ready to go into areas where you are permitted to assist. Working with your District UMVIM Coordinator will bring outside resources to bear on your local disaster. (Participation in the local VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters), will also provide information regarding the volunteer needs in your local community)

Be cautious about giving out money in the early stages of the response for personal safety reasons, and you will need to account for those funds.

Concentrate on meeting basic needs (i.e. food, temporary shelter, etc.).

**NOTE:** Money given directly to victims too soon can reduce the assistance they receive from other agencies, especially governmental.

Check on the well being of the pre-identified special populations within your church and community. Check and see if their needs being met.

As you provide leadership during and following a disaster, be willing to let others minister to you.

**YOU MUST TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF TO REMAIN EFFECTIVE!**

Following a Disaster

---- CHECK IN ---- CHECK UP ---- CHECK OUT!

CHECK IN - Let people know where you are and that you are ready to work!

CHECK UP - Contact each family, and make a report to the District Disaster Coordinator and the District Superintendents office.

CHECK OUT - Physically get out of your office and visit your church and community, a.s.a.p!

Support your congregation's participation in the long-term response and encourage them to work with the local VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters) to assist needs that might be overlooked by the federal agencies and insurance.

The Bishop will work with the District Superintendent and the DisasterResponse Team to make sure that any funding given to a local church for a specific disaster should be kept separate from other church funds and should be accountable to the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team. If the local church is not directly affected by the disaster, any money received should be forwarded to the district. And at the closure of a disaster, those funds, their accountability, and the closure form should be immediately forwarded to the District office; or if the funds are surplus funds from an UMCOR request, those funds must be returned to the Conference office for processing. All funds must be accounted for to the satisfaction of the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team.

**District Disaster Coordinator: expanded definition of responsibilities**

Early Preparation

Establish District Plans that are consistent with Conference Disaster Plan, making sure that there can be a coordinated effort of all churches and church related institutions in your district when a disaster strikes.

Work with the local church Disaster Relief Coordinators to help them in the development of the church disaster plans. This can be accomplished through district training events and/or working with churches individually.

Make sure that the church coordinator has an accurate list of phone number to call in case of a disaster. The Conference Disaster Coordinator has a laminated list that has all the numbers you need to maintain.

Encourage church coordinators to spearhead One Great Hour Offerings and other Advance Specials that deal with disaster relief.

Develop contacts with the county relief agencies (County Emergency Management, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, Mennonites, etc.), and encourage church participation in the local

VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters).

Encourage development of church Assessment Teams and arrange for Conference Trainers to teach these teams how to effectively do assessment work following a disaster. Encouraging several churches to participate in one training event will make best use of the Conference Coordinator's time.

After Disaster Strikes

Assess any injury in your own household; they are always your first responsibility.

Help the District Superintendent do a clergy head count and congregational needs!.

Establish a link between the Conference Disaster Relief Coordinator, the District Office, and the local church.

Call together the Local Church Response Leadership Teams, Local Church Coordinators, and find out what response they are planning, and make sure that they have funding and resources to be able to complete their ministry to the community.

Make sure that local churches have passed information to the District Superintendent and Conference Disaster Coordinator regarding the response that is being made.

Continue to keep regular contact with the church coordinator throughout the recovery.

Look for signs of fatigue and stress, and help leaders to pull away from the demands to take some personal time. If leaders are showing signs of fatigue and stress and will not step back or pull away, inform the Conference Disaster Coordinator of the situation.

The Bishop will work with the District Superintendent and the Disaster Response Team to make sure that any funding given to a local church for a specific disaster should be kept separate from other church funds and should be accountable to the district, the conference and the Disaster Response Team.

If the local church is not directly affected by the disaster, any money received should be forwarded to the district. And at the closure of a disaster, those funds, their accountability, and the closure form should be immediately forwarded to the District office; or if the funds are surplus funds from an UMCOR request, those funds must be returned to the Conference office for processing.

All funds must be accounted for to the satisfaction of the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team.

## District Superintendent Responsibilities

Early Preparation

Study the Conference disaster plan and its application for your area.

Keep a copy of the plan available. Know where it is on the conference web site or reference it at:  
<http://www.amenradio.org>

Appoint or have the Nominating Committee nominate, someone for the District Disaster Response Coordinator.

Pick someone with a heart for this special work.

Do not just stick a name into the position so you can say the position is filled.

Require the District Coordinator to attend Conference training sessions.

When Disaster is Imminent  
Stay current with the news.

Cancel any pre-approved leaves, study leaves, vacations, or other activities which would negate your effectiveness as a key leader.

**THIS IS NOT AN OPTION!**

Contact your District Coordinator and be prepared for possible action.

If your area is to be affected and evacuation is recommended, move out.

Let the Bishop, the Conference Disaster Coordinator, and your District coordinator know where you are and how to reach you!

After the Disaster Strikes

---- CHECK IN ---- CHECK UP ---- CHECK OUT!

CHECK IN - Let people know where you are and that you are ready to work!

CHECK UP - Contact each clergy, clergy family, and report it to the Conference Disaster

Coordinator and the Bishop's office.

CHECK OUT - Physically get out of your office and visit each church a.s.a.p!

One of the most important jobs you have is to be a pastor to the pastors who are working with the disaster. Visit them and make sure they are handling the stress involved in a disaster response.

Assess any injury in your own household; they are always your first responsibility.

Be attentive to fatigue and stress that might effect pastors in the effected areas. If needed, pull pastors from unaffected areas to assist.

Assess any damage to District Office or Parsonage.

Along with the District Disaster coordinator, begin checking on damage and injuries in the area. Work with the church and the District Disaster Coordinator on coordinating fund requests through the Conference Disaster Coordinator and the Conference Disaster Response Team.

The Bishop will work with the District Superintendent and the Disaster Response Team to make sure that any funding given to a local church for a specific disaster should be kept separate from other church funds and should be accountable to the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team.

If the local church is not directly affected by the disaster, any money received should be forwarded to the district. At the closure of a disaster, those funds, their accountability, and the closure form should be immediately forwarded to the District office; or if the funds are surplus funds from an UMCOR request, those funds must be returned to the Conference office for processing.

All funds must be accounted for to the satisfaction of the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team.

Be Disaster to encourage your District Coordinator to call the Conference Disaster Coordinator regarding resources that are needed. Let him or her know that he or she is not alone in the efforts.

#### Relief

As soon as reasonably possible, tour the affected area along with the Conference and District Coordinators and the Bishop.

Be available to District and Conference leadership.

#### Recovery

Be aware of the length of time the recovery can take. According to the severity of the disaster, recovery can take up to several years.

Keep in touch with District Disaster Response leadership.

Encourage churches near the disaster, which have not been affected, to share their facility as well as furnish leadership and workers.

Continually watch for "burn out" in the leadership - especially in affected pastors and their families. See that they get relief and time away.

Help leadership determine any resources that need to be requested.

#### In the Aftermath

Periodically check with the District Coordinator to determine when assistance can be terminated.

Meet with the district leadership for evaluation.

Make a report to the Bishop with yours and the District Coordinator assessments and copy the report to the Conference Disaster Coordinator.

At a district meeting, publicly acknowledge workers and work done.

### When a Disaster is Threatening

Most disasters do not have a warning period. However, in disasters such as a hurricane, where fairly accurate projections are given by the Weather Service, the Disaster Coordinator should be in the area a day before in order to survey the preparedness of the churches and to coordinate any immediate relief that will be needed.

While in the anticipated disaster area, the Conference Coordinator will give regular reports as to the status of readiness to the Disaster Response Team Chairperson and the Cabinet Representatives. These reports will become vital in coordinating funding of disaster relief.

## After Disaster Strikes

Advise the Disaster Response Team, Conference Representatives, and the Bishop of the extent of disaster and status of response within the bounds of the Annual Conference.

If UMCOR is invited to support the Conference effort, work with the UMCOR personnel in completing a disaster assessment to assist in planning the coordinated response.

Serve as an ongoing communication link with UMCOR, governmental, and non governmental relief agencies active in the response.

Participate, or appoint someone to participate, in Unmet Needs Committees. If possible, work to organize a coordinated interfaith long-term recovery response.

Report damage to church property to the Staff Architect, General Board of Global ministries, Evangelization and Church Growth.

Assess the need for a warehouse for gathering food, water, paper supplies, and baby supplies. This facility could also be used for delivery of plastic sheets and rolls for covering houses, by FEMA.

Supervise the administration and disbursement of any funds or material goods donations provided by the Annual Conference, local churches, or individuals, and be accountable for records of such distribution.

Assist residents of disaster impacted communities to establish their own long-term relief program.

Connect with the Conference UMVIM Coordinator to bring in volunteers to work in initial response.

Participate in the UMCOR closeout evaluation process.

## The Bishop

The leadership of the resident Bishop in a time of disaster is very important as it makes the presence and involvement of the church felt.

Visiting the affected area after a significant disaster is very important to those who are working in the disaster.

### Early Preparation

Evaluate and review the Conference Disaster Plan

Keep a written copy available.

Require each district to have a District Disaster Response coordinator.

Encourage coordinators to attend appropriate training sessions (i.e., Conference Coordinators to attend Jurisdictional events and District Coordinators attend Conference events).

Encourage coordinators' participation in appropriate training events that are sponsored by FEMA, UMCOR and VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster)

Appoint someone who can act on your behalf should you be out of the conference when disaster strikes.

### When disaster is imminent

Stay current with the news.

Be available for Conference leadership and be prepared for possible action.

Cancel any and all leaves, vacations, or special assignments, with the exception of illness, which would keep District Superintendents out of their districts.

Call the Conference Disaster Team to be on alert and prepare the conference for the disaster.

### After Disaster Strikes

Assess any damage or injury in your own household.

Begin checking on damage and injuries in the Conference by contacting District Superintendents and Conference Disaster Coordinators.

As soon as possible after the disaster, the Bishop should tour the affected areas, paying particular attention to the stress levels of the pastors. Clergy are much like doctors in that they are the worst patients. They need your encouragement to take time for recovery for themselves.

Respond to requests from The Disaster Response Team for assistance, financial or personnel, from UMCOR. Begin to assess the need for a financial appeal.

Be aware of the length of time the recovery can take. According to the severity of the disaster, recovery can take up to several years.

Keep in touch with Disaster Response leadership.

Insist that agencies of the Conference cooperate and help as needed.

When tension arises among the leadership, be available to help diffuse the situation.

Watch for "burn out" in the leadership, and address it.

Consider appointing Temporary Assisting Pastors and Temporary Assisting District Superintendents from the ranks of retired clergy to be assigned to help clergy in the disaster area.

Promote further financial appeals, Conference wide and to UMCOR, as needed.

Make additional visits to the affected area.

The Bishop will work with the District Superintendent and the Disaster Response Team to make sure that any funding given to a local church for a specific disaster should be kept separate from other church funds and should be accountable to the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team.

If the local church is not directly affected by the disaster, any money received should be forwarded to the district. And at the closure of a disaster, those funds, their accountability, and the closure form should be immediately forwarded to the District office; or if the funds are surplus funds from an UMCOR request, those funds must be returned to the Conference office for processing.

All funds must be accounted for to the satisfaction of the District, the Conference and the Disaster Response Team.

### The Aftermath

As fewer requests for aid are received, make plans with leadership to close Disaster Response office.

Have all involved leadership meet for reports and evaluation.

Receive copies of reports and evaluation of the disaster response.

Study reports and evaluations so as to be better prepared next time.

### Volunteers:

One of the greatest resources available to the United Methodist Church as it responds to the suffering and trauma of disaster, is a host of willing, committed volunteers. These caring men, women and youth assist with clean up, loading and unloading supplies, and rebuilding. They are also ready to give a hug and to bring hope to hurting victims.

In order for the volunteers to be effective, careful preparation and communication must be in place. The District Disaster Coordinator is a valuable link in the development of volunteer leaders who will be responsible for:

1. Communication with host community
2. Communication with volunteers who have indicated a willingness to help
3. Communication with survivors/victims of the disaster
4. Coordinating the work assignments of volunteer teams and the placement of them in community. This work is coordinated through the Conference Disaster Center.

The Local Church, District, and Conference Disaster Coordinators should make sure adequate preparation has been made in each of these areas of communication before scheduling of the volunteers.

If the disaster area is widespread, many teams will be needed at the same time. The Conference Disaster Coordinator will coordinate these teams, but an on-site volunteer manager is needed in each location where teams will be working and staying.

At times, UMCOR can provide a long-term volunteer (or volunteers) to carry out some of these important functions and do training. But they will only come as requested by the Conference and not a local church or district.

### E. Mitigation Strategy

**What Constitutes a Disaster:** A disaster is an event, natural or manmade, which displaces families within a specific area. Defining when such an event has occurred is somewhat arbitrary, but a response is justified if five (5) or more families are displaced in a specific area. At that point the local churches should take an active role in responding to the hardship that has been caused by the event. At that point the Conference will be willing to request funds from UMCOR to assist those families. That money will be available to the local churches who "own" the disaster.

Beyond displacement, a disaster might have occurred if a large segment of a population is effected in some adverse way (i.e. a hurricane doesn't hit a specific area, but large segments of population have been days without power or have experienced significant loss of food and damage because of those outages, or large groups of people have been dramatically effected economically). The Disaster Response Team will work with the Conference Disaster Coordinator to determine if there has been significant loss in a community that would warrant classifying the situation as a disaster.

For a strong conference plan, disaster relief must be proactive and not just reactive. That means that as a conference, we must decide on a long-term direction that will provide resources that we currently do not possess: resources that will make our Conference more effective in responding to the human need experienced during the aftermath of a disaster.

These resources will require funding and support from the Conference to become a reality. As a result, the long-term plans are an important part of the conference disaster plan.

#### The goals developed by the Disaster Response team are as follows:

1. Develop a Conference- wide communications network (including amateur radio with packet radio communications, and a web site). This network should eventually include resources to move into an affected area and establish communications to the areas unaffected by the disaster, communicate via the web site of the disaster status of resources needed, and communicate health and welfare information and general communications requests.
2. Develop effective training for Disaster Coordinators and local churches. Increase training to cover a broader spectrum of issues that may be faced by these coordinators and local churches. This would include developing a certification program, which would prepare individuals to manage emergency programs (i.e. feeding facility, a child care center, pet friendly shelters, etc.)
3. Create stronger relationships with State and County Emergency Organizations and participate in their training programs that relate to our Conference needs.
4. Create a stronger relationship with state and county VOADs.
5. Enlarge our depot structure to include depots in every district working with our Conference Depot in Madison to secure and store large quantities of disaster supplies that can be effectively stored and transported to areas of need.
6. Work with UMVIM to develop strong Early-Response Teams that will immediately respond to a disaster providing basic human support needs.
7. Develop our capacity to provide immediate care to effected areas: investigating feeding units and other avenues to help our churches in the effected areas.

These goals are funded by Conference Funds set aside through the normal budgeting process, by funds that are reclassified by UMCOR (typically funds left over from a disaster), and by funds that have come in from local churches for disaster relief.

It is the goal of the Disaster Response Team to effectively use the resources available in a manner that will enable and encourage the local church to become involved in alleviating human suffering caused by a disaster.

#### Use of UMCOR Funds

Requests for UMCOR funds are to originate from a local church, the District Disaster Coordinator or the Conference Disaster Coordinator. In the case of a local church or a District Disaster Coordinator, the District Superintendent needs to be informed of the need and be in agreement with that need.

The request is then forwarded to the Disaster Response Team from the group or person originating the request. Along with this request, there should be an itemized projection of how these funds are to be used.

The Disaster Response Team will make sure that the District Superintendent has been informed and then forward that request to the Cabinet Representatives.

Once they have approved the request, the chairman of the Disaster Response Team will contact the Bishop and make a formal request for the funds, both by fax and email.

The Bishop, if he or she approves of the expenditure, will contact UMCOR regarding this fund request. The Disaster Response Chairman will then work with UMCOR to make sure that the proper documentation is filed

and that any subsequent questions from UMCOR are answered.

The funds received from UMCOR will be deposited in a designated account for the specific disaster. The Disaster Response Team is then responsible to direct those funds to the needed area affected by the disaster.

There are actually two fund requests that can be filed. First, there is an initial request for a disaster for up to \$10,000. This request can be processed fairly quickly because it does not need additional approval from The Council of Bishops. But, additional funds, which are over and above that initial \$10,000 request, must go through an approval process by The Council of Bishops.

There are many issues that may necessitate additional structure for our Conference Plan, but this plan gives us the tracks to guide our becoming a strong pro-active Conference developing an organized, well supported and funded, comprehensive disaster program. The Disaster Response Team of the Florida Annual Conference always requests suggestions. This group is responsible for maintaining and developing this Conference plan.

#### H. Acronyms used:

ABC	American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. Perform disaster work through Church World Service (CWS). Not to be confused with the Southern Baptist who offer feeding in the Rescue phase.
AMEZ	African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Active in disasters in some areas of the country and through CWS
ARC or AmRC	American Red Cross. Provides emergency shelter and feeding, as well as offering additional assistance in the later stages of disasters. Only provides additional assistance to those who have gone through the FEMA Sequence of Delivery in presidentially declared disasters.
ARES	Amateur Radio Emergency Service - A special division of amateur radio dedicated to

	providing emergency radio communications before a disaster strikes, during a disaster, and in the relief and recovery phase of a disaster.
ARRL	<a href="http://www.arrl.org">Amateur Radio Relay League</a> is the nationally recognized society of radio amateurs who support and promote amateur radio, provide training, reference material, and interface with the Federal Communications Commission. <a href="http://www.arrl.org">http://www.arrl.org</a>
Center Manager	The <a href="#">Center Manager</a> is the person in charge of the Red Cross Service Center. A good person to get to know along with the Red Cross Jog Manager.
CERT	<a href="#">Community Emergency Response Team</a> is a group created in a community or township which would include the police, fire, and emergency personnel, the mayor, and key skilled people to direct the recovery and rescue efforts of their city or town.
CME	<a href="#">Christian Methodist Episcopal Church</a>
FEMA	<a href="#">Federal Emergency Management Agency</a> FEMA is part of the Department of Homeland Security's Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate. FEMA has more than 2,600 full time employees. They work at FEMA headquarters in Washington D.C., at regional and area offices across the country, the Mount Weather Emergency Operations Center, and the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland. FEMA also has nearly 4,000 standby disaster assistance employees who are available for deployment after disasters. Often FEMA works in partnership with other organizations that are part of the nation's emergency management system. These partners include state and local emergency management agencies, 27 federal agencies, American Red Cross and in some cases, directly with the United Methodist Church
DRT	<a href="#">Disaster Response Team</a> - This is a team of people with special skills and training to be both the "First Responders" to a disaster on the Conference's behalf, set up and implement the Conference Disaster Plan, direct relief operations, to channel and manage human resources, funds, and equipment, and to help establish a plan for long term recovery. The team leader or the Conference Disaster Coordinator has direct responsibility to the bishop and the Conference Program Coordinator.
UMCOR	<a href="#">United Methodist Committee on Relief</a> is an organization of the United Methodist Church in ministry to those in crisis both in the United States and around the world. In the United States, it serves as a system of resources and provides trained mentors to effected annual conferences. Globally, they also send and direct relief and rescue teams to developing countries. This organization gets its much of its support through our One Great Hour of Sharing offering.
UMVIM	<a href="#">United Methodist Volunteers in Mission</a> (UMVIM), SEJ exists to promote,

	<p>encourage and enable Christians to exemplify ““Christian Love In Action””. Our aim is to achieve the Great Commission through providing short-term mission opportunities for everyday Christians to reach a new generation with God's love. UMVIM provides opportunities for service by developing and nurturing relationships with domestic and international leaders. We continually evaluate our contacts with these leaders to provide comprehensive project information. Our office strives to connect volunteers’ talents to suitable projects for effective service.</p>
<p>VOAD</p>	<p><a href="#">Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster</a> - This is an assembly of many churches, temples, mosques, and other religious and non religious tax exempt organizations who, in unity, work with the local, state, and national government to bring relief to stricken areas of the United States.</p>