

MAINE CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST DISASTER AND TRAUMATIC EVENT PROTOCOL

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Our goal is to educate churches about local disaster and traumatic event protocols. We will help our churches and pastors with preparedness tools; and, if necessary, assist as they move through response and recovery toward a new normal.

Disasters and traumatic events manifest in many forms from those that affect individuals, families, and local communities to natural or a human-caused calamities potentially affecting large numbers of people.

Traumatic events may include an accidental death, a house fire, vehicular accident, diagnosis of a life-threatening condition, and loss of livelihood. For those most directly involved, such traumatic events may be as threatening to individual well-being as natural disasters such as a hurricane, tornado, ice-storm, blizzard, flood, or wildfire; or an act of destruction caused by a variety of technologically-created events or acts of human violence.

Many local churches and pastors have experience in responding to traumatic events as well as disasters. To reach the goal of educating churches, we seek (1) to share the wisdom and experience of local congregations in the Maine Conference; and (2) to draw upon and share best practices of churches nationwide and world-wide.

Ongoing Education Prep:

- Gather best practices information from local congregations: what they already know or are prepared to do in the face of a disaster or traumatic event
- Offer resources and education regarding traumatic events and disasters
- Assist churches to connect and become involved with their local community disaster response protocol and people and to know their town's protocol
- Direct churches to available online and social media trainings and educational resources including weblinks to existing resources
- Explore trauma remediation and resilience resources and trainings

Advanced Prep:

- Educate churches and pastors to notify Conference Office of disasters or traumatic events in their area
- Provide resources to local pastors and church leadership
- Educate churches to make connections with their community Emergency Management Director to learn how a church can participate
- Encourage local churches to discuss disaster response protocols with ecumenical and civic society partners
- Connect with Maine Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster or similar organizations

Conference Minister (CM) and Conference Disaster Coordinator (CDC) determine an appropriate response, which may include some or all of the following:

Within 12 hours following an event:

- Begin contacting churches and specialized ministries (clergy and laity) via direct contact (phone, text or email) to offer support and assess need
- Send a pastoral email and update to the affected congregations and their leadership.
- Notify National UCC Disaster Ministries and possibly activate resources and support

Within 48 hours following an event:

- Connect with authorized pastoral leaders in disaster areas (parish and non-parish settings)
- Disseminate information to churches

Within the first week following an event:

- Collaborate with local church leadership on recovery efforts
- Continue meetings to collaborate support and relief efforts
- Keep Conference Churches informed as needed and National UCC
- Visit disaster site if possible
- Keep National UCC Disaster Ministries updated & discuss resources/grants, if applicable
- Begin conversations on potential funding needs and connect with National UCC on resources
- Assess, and support churches and specialized ministries in the disaster zone; ministering to them and through them (This will include practical, emotional, and spiritual needs).
- Continue to disseminate information to churches
- Work with and through partners

Second week through three months following an event:

- Continue support in and through local churches and specialized ministries
- Continue support, encourage and be a resource to pastors, consider lunch gatherings
- Provide 'debriefs' if helpful: Clergy, Laity and Volunteers
- Continue collaboration with Disaster Partners and National UCC, including application for funds through UCC National Disaster Ministries
- Facilitate assistance from Conference churches
- Continue communication to Conference churches
- Begin conversations and education around Long Term Recovery Groups formation
- Gather stories of impact and recovery efforts to update Conference churches
- Support Efforts of Long-Term Recovery Groups and local church pastors

Three months+ following an event:

- Continue collaboration with Disaster Partners
- Continue communication and coordination with Conference churches
- Facilitate Assistance with National UCC Disaster Ministries
- Begin evaluations to gather lessons learned and best practices
- Develop a plan for long term monitoring of pastors (and their families), churches and recovery efforts