

Thursday, October 01, 2015

Friends and Colleagues,

As you well know by now, Hurricane Joaquin continues to move in our direction. Although the path is uncertain, we can expect some degree of destructive weather over the next few days. It may be that the rain event on Friday and Saturday will affect us as severely or more severely than Joaquin. Please be advised that, aside from your personal preparations, some community preparations can help to minimize the threat to health and welfare, and maximize the effectiveness of post-storm assistance.

As a Christian presence in our communities, we are a prominent fixture representing hope, care, and concern to our community members. This can be said of those who are actively engaged in our ministries, as well as those who are not. The people of our communities will look to the Church to provide comfort, care, and material support before, during, and after the storm event. This is an opportunity to put into action the faith that we profess.

There are four stages in the evolution of a potential major storm event that we need to be aware of at this time:

**The pending stage** includes the days leading up to the event - in other words, NOW! During this time, we can make preparations regarding communications during and after the storm. Possible activities:

- **Organize a contact tree**, remembering that communications may be difficult following an event.
- **Check in with church and community members** to determine whether they plan to stay or evacuate during the event. Make a special effort to include those who are vulnerable in our communities. This includes those who are elderly, infirm, home-bound, live alone, or those who may not possess the means to evacuate.

- **If an evacuation order is issued, clergy members and their families are expected to abide by it as an example** to other community members.

**The event stage** is the period of time where the storm effects are at their peak - also known as the “hunker down” stage. **Do not leave the safety of shelter during this time.** Please keep in mind that individuals caught in the dangerous effects of a storm pose a serious threat to the safety and well-being of those who might have to attempt a rescue. We can avoid this threat by staying in safe shelter.

**The rescue/emergency stage** is the time immediately following the storm event. This can be a very dangerous time. **We largely leave the rescue/emergency efforts to those who are properly trained and equipped for the task.** There are many dangers that are present following a storm, so we need to be extremely cautious so as not to create additional emergency situations. During this time:

- **Utilize your contact tree** to account for community members. In doing so, we might find ourselves in a position to efficiently direct emergency efforts in our communities.

**The response/relief stage** happens in the weeks following the event. This stage does not begin until the rescue/emergency stage is complete, which can vary according to the severity of the storm. During this time, it will be important for us to work together as a connectional system to offer response/relief where needed. **The District Office will be the central organizing entity for these efforts. Please contact the office as soon as possible following the storm to report on any damage or needs.**

--Rev. Derek Tomek

Eastern Shore District Disaster Response Team Leader

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