

# BEREAN CHURCH DISASTER PLAN

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

For Berean Church Christian Church  
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## Introduction

The goal of this disaster response manual is to provide an important level of self-sufficiency for BEREAN DISASTER TASK FORCE without over extending the church's means. Following a local disaster, there are several tough questions to be answered when everything around the church may be seriously damaged or destroyed or necessary services are not available.

The key is preparation to save valuable time and reduce frustration in the days and weeks pre-and post disaster. It is the hope that being well prepared will help BDTF accomplish this. This plan will focus on steps for each of the following areas:

1. Securing the local church facilities before a disaster strikes
2. Assisting, where needed and practical, with the congregation's preparation for a disaster
3. Disaster response with a focus on the church, community and Dekalb Distinct

### OVERVIEW OF BEREAN DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN

The Berean Disaster Response is designed to care for the victims of any type of disaster including the people in our congregation and our community, in the event a disaster strikes at home or in the surrounding area. To do this, we will:

1. Train BDTF volunteers in disaster response, from early responder phase through recovery phase.
2. Designate the church as a point of contact for assistance after any disaster either natural, environmental, manmade or economic if it is structurally safe and out of danger from other influences of the disaster.

3. Immediately follow up with our congregation, identify their needs, and aid from the emergency phase through recovery, paying special attention to the needs of senior citizens, persons with physical disabilities, children and youth.
  - a. This means BDTF needs to have immediate access to families who live on specific streets or within a set of zip codes.
  - b. We will also have a calling process with assignments, questions to ask, and instructions on how to report back the results of personal contact.
4. Relay information to the BDTF pastors about the needs and resources that BDTF can provide.
5. Organize volunteer teams to help feed, shelter, offer pastoral counseling, and repair teams to help secure homes in the surrounding community.
6. Cooperate with emergency response personnel and damage assessors by passing along information about needs areas.
8. Become a spiritual and resource hub of the community.
9. If not impacted directly, BDFT may be a center of mission coordination, funding, distribution, and sending volunteer in mission teams as needed.

#### CONGREGATION IN RESPONSE PLAN

##### A. Church Organizational Roles and Areas Suggested support teams within the church to enable effective response: Emergency Coordinator

- Coordination with pastor, church leaders, local governmental agencies
  - Communications Congregational Contact
  - Contact with every household in the congregation identifying needs and status
- Administrative Coordinator
- Keep records of service and assistance giving by family received?
  - Keep records of congregation needs and status
  - Donation control
  - Food and supplies

##### B. Emergency Coordinator

- Prayer vigil, crisis intervention and counseling Clean-up
  - Volunteer coordination
  - Clean Up, salvage, and repairs Support
  - Setup for cooking and food distribution, water, sanitation, rest and recuperation 5
- Staff Support of Pastors

- Insure the safety of the pastor and family both immediately following the disaster and during recovery. Church Property
- Security of church property, insurance, damage/status of church property, place of worship, coordination of repairs to church property.

#### C. Congregational Contact

- Notify pastor. Coordinator, assistant coordinator and teams of emergency.
- Coordinate with all assistants and teams available.
- Coordinate with all local government and enforcement agencies.
- Keep pastor and board informed.

#### D. Administration

- Insure assistant pastors have seen to their members and oversee administrative evacuation.
  - Provide a select room for information.
  - Make available guidance and support to all teams and pastor during event.
  - Secure formation by a Disaster Response Committee with a Chairperson
- Congregational Contact

- Contact every household in the congregation if possible
- Identify needs, status and situation Administrative Coordinator
- Insure a smooth as possible operation always.

#### E. Supply

- Prepare and keep up to date preplans in adequate supply.
- Keep a journal of all activities.
- Help manage financial records and see to availability of funds.
- See to safekeeping of church records.
- Maintain member and assistant pastor's records.
- Maintain video record of church and all related property inside and outside.
- Provide immediate post disaster video for insurance, historical record and public relations or call for aid. Supplies
- Maintain pre-disaster supplies.
- Manage incoming transportation post disaster.
- Implement a system of distributing goods and services.

- Keep a journal.

#### F. Pastoral Care

- Prayer service for the recovery, naming congregational persons and needs
- Crisis intervention
- Counseling
- Securing food and ongoing needs
- Follow-up with homebound persons

#### G. Clean Up

- Assemble teams to clean up and put back in use all church facilities.
- Assemble teams to help clean up the community paying close attention to the elderly.
- Coordinate work teams with local agencies.
- Report any dangerous or emergency situations that arise.

#### H. Support

- Setup water distribution.

Provide and insist on days off and time away for pastors and family for personal recovery and to guard against burnout.

- Security of church property
- Coordinate with insurance companies
- Assess damage of church property
- Secure temporary place of worship

#### I. Church Property

• Coordination of repairs to church property after insurance assessment BDTF will follow the guidelines and directives of all local authorities. We will keep a journal of everything done; record the events with picture and videos. These will be important documentation of the disaster and may be useful in obtaining more help and materials when needed. We will remember in all that we do, that God calls us to serve with our hands and hearts, following the lead of the Holy Spirit as a witness to God's love in the church

J . Identify People in the Church and Community Before a hurricane (disaster) is eminent, people in the church and in the community, will be identified by their ability to help, their needs and frailties rather than just where they live whether they go to Berean Christian Church.

1. A secure list of people and their addresses will be prepared, including a city street map or a county road map with a numerical or alphabetical code to mark their residences or places of business.

2. List the resources that these people have and are willing to share during times of emergency or need. People with professional skills such as those who can provide basic labor information such as the following will be available but treated as confidential:

- correct addresses and directions to residence and business
- any major health problems, i.e. insulin dependent diabetic
- telephone and cellular numbers
- radio frequencies and call signs
- sort list by last name, by address, by resources, by location, by skills

#### K. Care for Persons with Special Needs

Unusual Care ministries provide shepherding within BDTF. In a crisis, they may wish to expand their focus to include persons beyond the congregation. Their list of congregates needs includes persons confined to their bed or restricted by a wheelchair or walker and persons who would need assistance in providing more than basic care for themselves. The care givers are assigned the position of shepherd to look after the needy in times of crisis including seeing that they are evacuated to where they can be cared for during a disaster. Additional guides may need to be involved to help with grocery shopping, doctor visits, medicine management, keeping the home safe and any other tasks that the person can no longer do for themselves. The Assistant Pastor's List takes a certain amount of responsibility from the pastor and emergency director by knowing that a responsible person is looking after those who will need caring for until family members can take over or aid in assessment.

#### L. Identify Needs

The first level of response is to the BDTF congregation, then the community and then the state. The existing church directory is a list of the parishioners and will be used by the Berean Disaster Response Team to contact all the parishioners and then report back to the Disaster Response Committee Chairperson regarding the specific needs following a disaster.

1. When hurricane warnings are issued for this area, it is recommended to contact the congregation before the storm with the purpose of identifying who will be evacuated and who will stay in the area.

2. After a storm or other disaster BDTF will focus on person-to-person contacts to identify environments and needs. The calling process:

a. Sections of the membership list are assigned to a leader who then contacts those persons on his/her list.

b. If the person called does not answer, the caller continues until someone is reached and the list is complete. If someone should be at home and there is no answer, the caller should go check on that person or family. It is important to keep calling until all have been notified.

c. Record the person's response, noting if there are injuries, crises, and special needs and if the home is habitable. Use the following questions to glean a better understanding of urgency and needs:

i. Do you have any damage to your home?

ii. Do you need help? What are your needs?

iii. Can you continue living in your home? Do you have a place to stay?

iv. Are your driveway and doors clear?

v. It is recommended that you contact your insurance company and take photos?

vi. Do you know what agencies to contact for help?

vii. If you are okay, are you willing to offer help to others and if so, what type?

d. Contact the emergency post by phone or in person immediately and report your findings. Respond to Urgent Needs. We will be prepared as early responders, to organize volunteers that can help with debris clearance, temporary safety repairs, roof coverings, food supplies, and other needs as they arise. This would be considered a minimum amount of food and water just to care for work teams if the team leaves the local area. Volunteer teams will be organized and routed on assignments in response to the needs of the congregation and in collaboration with the District of Dekalb County churches through the Berean Disaster Response Task Force. Under no circumstances will church teams be sent until the Ga. Emergency Management gives clearance for volunteers to be on site if Ga. power lines are no longer a safety issue. Volunteers can bring their own equipment for debris removal, but each volunteer must operate their own equipment. Berean Disaster Response Task Force will not assume responsibility for persons using any type of equipment. Volunteers must sign a waiver of liability and medical information forms, leaving a copy of their driver's license and health insurance cards with a designated Berean Disaster Response staff member prior to being dispatched on a volunteer team.

#### PROTECTING BEREAN FACILITIES AND DATA

The following text on protecting Berean facilities and data is the recommendation of the Ga State Protection Agency. Protection of the church is of immense importance. It is not possible to bodily protect and board windows of the church building, and take steps to protect important records and items within the building can be taken.

As for protecting the building, Protection agencies recommends that unless Berean Disaster Task Force is the only structure left standing or there is some defined strategic reason to designate it as such, one of the most important rules to follow is that BDTF should not be designated as an evacuation shelter or relocation center.

#### M. Personal Responsible for Church Property

The Board and the pastors are responsible for the local church facilities. However, it is important to assign specific responsibility for each of these personal and to protect vital church records.

- Other than the pastors, who is responsible for securing the doors and windows and shutting off the gas, water and electricity? Appointed personal will be chosen in advance for emergencies.
- Who is responsible for gathering records or valuables?
- Who is responsible for keeping inventory and insurance up to date?
- Who will check for damages after a storm? If the church is damaged, where will you meet for worship? • Can you evacuate your committee?
- How are church records secured? Is computer data backed up and regularly stored in a safe off-site location? Use of BDTF Property as a Shelter. If BDTF is offered to be a selected emergency shelter, an approved agency, such as the American Red Cross, will first need to inspect the building and facilities and either accept or reject it as a shelter. If it is accepted as a shelter and if there is a disaster in the area the approving agency will take control of the church facility and after the pending danger has passed, volunteers will take over and they will operate as needed from the church. It is important to think ahead on this decision because it is possible that everything will be removed from the sanctuary for conversion to a warehouse, a hospital, a clinic, administrative facilities or even an emergency nursing home. BDTF will no longer have control of anything until the controlling agency relinquishes control of the facilities. BDTF leadership needs to be very cautious about letting any agency have control over the church building and grounds under our sphere of responsibility. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that BDTF not be used as an emergency shelter.

Securing Church Records must be protected if there is a warning with time for gathering certain items. Computerized records should be backed up each time they are updated; three different people should maintain at least three copies of the backed- up files. If a laptop computer is available and has adequate memory, download files and records so that you have an active record system that can be set up in a remote site. Keep in mind the church privacy policy. If the church system is destroyed, the importance of this simple protective measure will make a crucial difference. Some disasters give no warning and no area is exempt from possible destruction. This stands true even for those who live in an area that has never been affected. Natural disasters know no direction or boundaries. Securing Other Assets If there is warning of hurricane and flooding, protect more than church files:

- Place important books and records that are too bulky to remove on top of the highest furniture available that will not easily float or upset in high water.
- Cover everything that is placed for protection with 6-8 mil plastic. Use several layers in case one or two are pierced or torn. Use duct tape to seal and secure the plastic.
- As a last measure, place a tarp over protected items to add one last measure of protection in case the roof is lost or windows break.
- Raise anything of value as high off the floor as possible. This includes furniture, Bibles, hymnals and anything of value that is easily movable.
- The altar cross, candles, chalice etc. should be evacuated with the pastor or other designated person. These items will be necessary in setting up a worship center if the church is destroyed or heavily damaged.

Trustees will not take chances in occupying a damaged church building until it has been inspected and have written verification that it is safe to occupy the building.

Remember, the building is only a church house.

The people, the Body of Christ, are the church. Insurance policies on the building, contents and property should be reviewed and updated annually. Many items of definite value are purchased and never added to 12 inventory lists or covered by insurance. There should be an inventory of everything that has any value. Make a photographic inventory with a still or video camera. Keep three copies and give them to three different responsible persons.

#### BDTF AS A SPIRITUAL CENTER

If the church is not heavily damaged and is safe to occupy, it must remain open as a spiritual center. Even if the whole area is demolished, there will be a need to conduct some sort of Sunday Service. It may be for prayer, for gathering to see who and what is still standing, for information passing and for just whatever is necessary. But, the service must be held in the face of all odds, the people will need it and they will depend on it. The church will become the local spiritual center as well as the focal point of any response or recovery efforts. The churches outside the affected area will be the place for volunteers, supplies, administration, and prayer vigils. Keep the doors open to the spiritual refuge.

If the church facilities are declared unsafe for any reason, the pastor and available members of the Board of Trustees will select a site where worship can continue. If the church should fall victim to the disaster and not be safe for occupancy or remain only as a pile of holy rubble, at least find a tree, tent or awning to gather under. Set up a homemade altar and make a cross to adorn it. The pastor and the victims will need this Holy Place to turn to at this time. Take the time before an emergency or some disaster strikes to covenant with other churches, including other denominations, so that you may enjoy that cooperative atmosphere in the wake of some disaster. The covenant with other churches will make your program stronger and more efficient especially when outside help is days or weeks away.

## DISASTERS - NATURAL AND HUMAN GENERATED

We are not invulnerable to disaster. Depending on our geographical location, we can suffer from snow, ice, flood, extreme heat, hurricane, tornado, tsunami, earthquake, and strong wind. We must also consider the possibility of forest fires, hazardous materials and nuclear accidents, electrical blackouts, droughts and the results of disasters such as layoffs, job closings, and loss of wages due to disasters. This program is not just about hurricanes and storing up some groceries, a radio, items of food. This program is about response to the neighborhood and community when a disaster strikes. It makes no difference if disaster affects thousands of people, the basic preparatory methods and initial response and information gathering are the same.

