



Triennial Assembly 2016 - Diakonia: Engaging God's Mission Open Space Notes

Episcopal Relief and Development - Disaster Preparedness and Response

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Our time together was largely a question and answer time concerning Preparedness and Response. Below is a list of the questions, responses and examples that we all discussed about what's possible from a preparedness perspective and what's possible from a response perspective.

- The group was informed about the history of the U.S. Disaster Program of Episcopal Relief and Development. It was an outgrowth of Hurricane Katrina and has developed into a small staff of four. The intent of the group is to equip churches and their leadership and dioceses and their leadership in preparing for emergencies and in learning about the breadth of responses that are possible.
- The group was informed about the Partners In Response team, a small consulting team of volunteers that can be deployed to disasters to help "on the ground" with the above work.
- The U.S. Disaster Program has encouraged the naming of a Diocesan Disaster Coordinator (by the local diocese) and conducts trainings for this group periodically.
- Another creation is the Asset Map which has been and is continuing to be populated by local dioceses with all the various outreach work that churches do across the country.
- The website of the Disaster Program contains shell documents to be used to create disaster preparedness plans for local churches and dioceses/
- A question was asked well what if not one of those plans, then what. The answer was that hopefully the shell documents can encourage a conversation so that a church can create their own preparedness plan that works for them.
- An example of an event that could be used to create motivation to have a plan was offered as a health incident at a church picnic. Who would do what?
- An example was offered that a woman clergy person was excluded from community places, even businesses, because she was a woman. She put together a small group of women who created a shelter for those who were excluded from the community shelters.
- Another person said they were having a tornado simulation in July. Others offered answers to the what if of that situation.
- Questions to be asked in the preparedness meetings are; what can the Episcopal Church do? What is our niche?
- People were reminded of Toxic Charity.
- People were encouraged to think about their churches assets such as buildings and other property and how they could be used in a response to a disaster.
- A suggestion was offered to think of deacons as telephone operators in a disaster – in other words being the connection – connecting those affected with appropriate resources.
- A teaching was offered on the emotional life cycle of a disaster.