

September is National Preparedness Month – Are you Ready for the Next Disaster?

Unfortunately, disasters happen – whether it is weather-related, a fire, loss of life or property... What can we do to prepare, both as a church and personally?

West Virginia VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) is the state chapter of the National VOAD. WV VOAD consists of organizations active in disaster response throughout the state of West Virginia. WV VOAD's role is to bring organizations together and enable them to understand each other and work together during times of disaster preparedness, response, relief and recovery. WV VOAD adheres to the principles established by the National VOAD. The principles are referred to as the 4C's:

*Cooperation *Communication *Coordination *Collaboration

These principles serve as the foundation for the West Virginia VOAD as it collaborates with local, regional and national partners to coordinate disaster relief, response and recovery efforts in times of disaster.

We are fortunate in that the Presbytery of West Virginia has two representatives who sit with WV VOAD – Mike Jarrett (Teays Valley Presbyterian) and Joan Stewart (Executive Director of WVMMAW). Mike has been asked by WV VOAD and by the West Virginia Council of Churches to work on training. Joan Stewart and WVMMAW continue to respond to long-term recovery needs, coordinating response in the name of Christ through work teams (<http://www.wvmaw.org/WVMMAW/Home.html>). Both are available to assist in training or conversation about preparing or responding to disasters.

The West Virginia Council of Churches has developed a structure for pastoral care and immediate response for disasters. For the Presbyterian churches in West Virginia, pastors will have the opportunity for training to work beside behavioral health experts as a faith based care partner. This training will begin shortly after the West Virginia Council of Churches Annual Assembly. Mike Jarrett is meeting to begin training pastors in clusters to render pastoral care, to assist WV VOAD with initial property assessment and to serve local health departments as faith-based volunteers.

How can you prepare for a disaster? PDA (Presbyterian Disaster Assistance) has recommended these resources for churches:

--Disaster Preparation for Small Churches

--Disaster Preparation for Medium-sized Churches

-- <http://pda.pcusa.org/pda/resources/>

-- <http://www.ready.gov/september>