



Mercy Minute

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE COMMITTEE ON DIACONAL MINISTRIES

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A Deacon's Role in OPC Disasters Far Away

By David Nakhla,
OPC Disaster Response
Coordinator

Just a few years ago, the only official disaster response entity in the OPC was at the denominational level. One of my roles is to serve the denomination as the Disaster Response Coordinator. In God's providence, just prior to the 2017 "triple-whammy"—three hurricanes impacting three presbyteries within three weeks—the Committee on Diaconal Ministries had begun to encourage presbytery diaconal committees to take more leadership in the realm of disaster response. After all, aren't disasters inherently a local or regional event? The move in this direction proved invaluable in enabling these three disaster response efforts to occur simultaneously: Harvey (Houston), Irma (Florida), and Maria (Puerto Rico).

As the OPC's Disaster Response Coordinator, I have been, more recently, interested in seeing our church take this even one step further. I have been desiring to see local deacons take an active role in owning disaster response, not just those that impact your church locally (which should go without saying), but also those that impact the OPC outside the bounds



of your local church. And, you know what? I am so encouraged to see many of you brothers begin to do just that!

As of the writing of this article, we are now a little past the middle of hurricane season (June 1 to November 30). Hurricane Sally is currently threatening the Gulf Coast. Hurricane Laura roared on shore just a little over two weeks ago, deluging the coast and impacting at least one OP congregation from downed trees and power lines. Tropical Storm Isaias was only a few weeks before that, flooding the home of one OP family in Maryland.

Beyond hurricanes, wildfires have been raging on the West coast for weeks now and last week consumed the homes of two OPC families in Oregon. The crazy "Derecho" winds stirred up the Midwest recently. Disasters seem to be around us on every side.

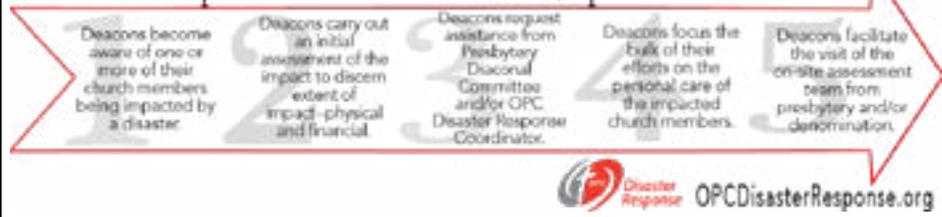
It is likely that none of these disasters mentioned has directly affected you. But, for the few affected, the impact is immense. And this is precisely the importance and value of

a connected church being organized to minister to one another, such that when one part of the Body suffers the impact of a disaster, the whole Body suffers with it (1 Corinthians 12).

Brother deacons, I need each one of you. First, I need the prayers you offer on our behalf. Nothing worthwhile is accomplished outside the prayers of God's people. Second, I need the offerings you take up for the benefit of others. Assisting someone rebuild their home without FEMA dollars or insurance payouts requires money, and usually a lot of it.

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Five Initial Steps for Deacons in Disaster Response



A Mission of Mercy: Disaster Advanced Response Team

by Mike Cloy, Elder, Reformation OPC, Gastonia, NC



In 2017, the Presbytery of the Southeast (PSE) Diaconal Committee committed itself to develop a way in which to respond to disasters so that churches could resume worshipping together after the impact of natural disasters. Providentially, the Lord provided proof of principle for a coordinated and trained disaster response team through Hurricane Florence.

Six Dorr brothers contacted David Nakhla, OPC Disaster Response Coordinator, who referred them to me. They were able to assist the Presbytery of the Southeast during Hurricane Florence and provide mercy ministry to the OP churches in New Bern and Wilmington, NC.

This experience enabled the PSE to select qualified men from within the PSE to serve on their organic D.A.R.T. (Disaster Advanced Response Team), to train them, and to purchase the necessary equipment and tools to perform their duties.

Teams are equipped with a skid steer (Bobcat), fuel transport tanks, chainsaws (extra bars, chains, and service tools), protective gear, many other tools needed for immediate response aid, food and water for the number of days they intend to be deployed, as well as the ability to sleep in the trailer if needed.

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OPC Disaster Response



OPC Disaster Response has been hopping during this unprecedented year. We hope you've followed along on social media and on our website. We currently have 252 registered volunteers. We are hoping for 300 by the end of this hurricane season (end of November).

Please let us know you are willing to help. Share with your church. Change lives through OPC Disaster Response.

OPCDisasterResponse.org

Do you get a copy of the Mercy Minute to your inbox? If not, contact the CDM Administrator, David Nakhla david.nakhla@opc.org

NATIONAL DIACONAL SUMMIT 2021
June 10-12, 2021

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"Deacons Well-Equipped"

We hope you are seriously considering coming to the OPC Fourth National Diaconal Summit. You won't regret it. Workshops have a limited amount of space. Use the photo app on your phone to scan the code below and find out more and save your spot!

An Update on OPC Refugee Relief

by Rev. Chris Cashen,
Evangelist to Refugees, Clarkston, GA

What comes to mind when you hear of "refugee ministry"? Possibly ministry that requires travel to a particular place, hours or days of training, the acquisition of difficult language skills, and certainly sensitivity to cultural differences. While some of these may be helpful, none of them are barriers or obstacles to becoming actively engaged in ministering to refugees. The work is actually much less daunting than it might sound. In fact, think of it in the way our Lord clearly taught: "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God." Lev. 19:34 (ESV). There it is: minister mercy to the refugee (that is, the "stranger") who lives near you "as the native among you." In other words, we are all called to minister to refugees just as we would our next door neighbors who are in need. This passage puts refugee ministry in perspective.

While there may be cultural and language differences when ministering mercy to refugees as compared to US born neighbors, the work is essentially the same. As an example, just as others throughout the country suffer with the effects of COVID-19, so do our new neighbors from Syria, Ethiopia, Congo and Tanzania. During the last several months, we have purchased, packaged and delivered food, helped our friends complete rent assistance forms, and delivered rent payment checks. These opportunities provided entry into our neighbors' homes and, in their time of need, the ability to speak to them of the gracious salvation offered by Jesus and pray in His name. To be sure, refugees also have unique needs that many of our US born neighbors don't experience: help completing immigration forms or navigating the department of motor vehicles for a driver's license.

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