

*An Inter-Lutheran Journal
for Practitioners and
Teachers of Pastoral Care
and Counseling*



CARING CONNECTIONS

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THE PURPOSE OF CARING CONNECTIONS

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling is written by and for Lutheran practitioners and educators in the fields of pastoral care, counseling, and education. Seeking to promote both breadth and depth of reflection on the theology and practice of ministry in the Lutheran tradition, *Caring Connections* intends to be academically informed, yet readable; solidly grounded in the practice of ministry; and theologically probing.

Caring Connections seeks to reach a broad readership, including chaplains, pastoral counselors, seminary faculty and other teachers in academic settings, clinical educators, synod and district leaders, others in specialized ministries, and—not least—concerned congregational pastors and laity. *Caring Connections* also provides news and information about activities, events, and opportunities of interest to diverse constituencies in specialized ministries.

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Editorial

Emergency vehicles are equipped with high pitched sirens to warn of their approach. When someone is waiting anxiously for an ambulance, the sound of the siren in the distance brings the expectation that help is on the way. A tornado siren warns communities of impending disaster.

To many chaplains, the sound of the pager going off comes to signify an element of caution. When I worked as a chaplain in a busy urban trauma center, the shrill sound of my pager could mean anything from a routine Advance Directive request to an impending death notification for a young mother.

The new issue of *Caring Connections* Summer 2009 explores the role of pastoral care in disaster. This topic is pertinent for many reasons. Lutherans have been leaders in many aspects of specialized pastoral care, including in disaster response. As well, the work of every chaplain and pastoral care giver draws upon the same skills needed for disaster response. Ranging all the way from a disaster as large as Katrina to the sudden death of one person, the same intense feelings of loss and grief appear. Lutheran chaplains day in and day out provide presence in the midst of these tragedies.

Rev. Glenn Merritt is the Director of Disaster Response in the LCMS's World Relief and Human Care. Glenn shares with us the power and meaning of pastoral presence in times of disaster.

Rev. Beverly Wallace shares a unique perspective from her service as a spiritual care provider in the gulf following Hurricane Katrina.

Rev. Robert Stroud shares his personal reflection of serving as a military chaplain providing pastoral care during the active recovery stage from a mass casualty airplane crash.

I have provided a piece exploring the concept of resilience. Both following disaster or following other emergencies and crises, individuals, families, and faith communities exhibit resilience, which can be bolstered through a variety of ways.

Chaplain Jodi Barry describes her experiences responding to the bridge collapse in Minneapolis and shares helpful tips and advice for pastoral care in disaster.

If you have not already done so, we hope you will subscribe online to *Caring Connections*. Remember, subscription is free! By subscribing, you assure that you will receive prompt notification when each issue of the journal appears on the *Caring Connections* website. This also helps the editors and editorial board to get a sense of how much interest is being generated by each issue. You can subscribe by clicking on the subscription link on www.caringconnections.org, or by following the directions given on the masthead (p. 3), or in larger print on page 23.

Call for Articles

Caring Connections seeks to provide Lutheran Pastoral Care Providers the opportunity to share expertise and insight with the wider community. We want to invite anyone interested in writing an article to please contact the editors, Rev. Kevin Massey and Rev. Chuck Weinrich.

Specifically, we invite articles for upcoming issues on the following themes.

Fall 2009 "The Role of Forgiveness"

Spring 2010 "Parish Nursing ... Granger Westberg"

A Ministry of Presence: The Power, Privilege, and Practice of Presence!

A ministry of presence replaces moments of misery with moments of mercy.

The Power of Presence

In the midst of terrible devastation, hope dawned new at Peace Lutheran Church in Greensburg, Kan. Picture this: As the pastor recovers church records from a bent and battered file cabinet, one of the elders sifts through shattered stain glass and splintered pews for anything salvageable. Nearby the elder's wife finds photo albums and sits down to remember yesterdays at Peace. Another elder joins her and together they reflect on memories of days gone by.

The power of presence was evident on May 7, 2007, as I stood in the massive debris field that was once the small town of Greensburg. The presence of God was evident in the character and courage of the residents as they returned to survey the incredible destruction of their homes and town. At the same time, the presence of emergency services personnel, the National Guard, and state and local officials brought a sense of order and calm to chaotic circumstances. Later on, the presence of President George W. Bush was unmistakable as he held hands, prayed, and lifted up the spirits of those affected by this terrible tragedy.

Being there, holding hands, and lifting up spirits are important, to be sure, but a ministry of presence must bring more than a mere pat on the back or a well-meaning prayer. A ministry of presence embodies the presence of Christ by meeting the emotional, spiritual, and physical needs of the helpless and hurting.

The power of the presence of LCMS Disaster Response at disaster scenes finds its source in Christ's enduring presence in our own lives. It is an awesome responsibility to stand in the stead of Christ offering whole-person, Christian care.

Christ's presence after His resurrection demonstrates the power He has to console and comfort the needy. Christ's powerful presence is the preeminent paradigm for our ministry of mercy, which can dispel the darkness of fear and uncertainty of the future.

Jesus' disciples were lost in the tragedy of His death when He came to them with calming words, comforting them with His presence. According to John, when they saw Him they were glad.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with



you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord (John 20:19-20, ESV).

It was the power of Christ's presence that moved His disciples from the tragedy of death to the triumph of life. That same power is realized today in the ministry of the church through those who stand in his stead to transcend the critical events that affect peoples' lives.

A ministry of presence embodies the presence of Christ...

The Privilege of Presence

It is a privilege to be present in the name of Christ in my work as director of LCMS Disaster Response. A ministry of presence is a ministry with the Gospel as its matrix that helps transform victims into survivors — a necessary step on the road to recovery

and renewal.

In Southern California, I stood in the ash of a home consumed by wildfire. The pastor and his wife spoke through tear-stained eyes, and shared their incredible story of survival and surprise. In a flash of fire, they were left with no place to live, no furniture, no clothing, and no personal effects. It was all gone. There was nothing left to salvage.

While it is a privilege to be with people and listen to their story, empathy without action is not ministry. A ministry of presence does more than listen. We are reminded:

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth (1 John 3:17-18).

The desolation and despondency often felt by victims of disaster or tragedy is not easily broken. There is more to the ministry of presence than just being present with the brokenhearted. A ministry of presence replaces moments of misery with moments of mercy. These mercy moments are delivered by those privileged to stand in the stead of Christ at the crossroads of tragedy and triumph. The privilege of presence includes service in tangible ways.

Not everyone agrees, as seen in the following statement:

The purpose of a ‘ministry of presence’ or the ‘art of hanging out’ is to provide a ‘non-anxious presence,’ to potentially be an ‘active listener’ while holding an outreached hand, offering a cup of coffee, or mucking out a home. To engage a person impacted by disaster is to ask them to tell their story.

But, there is always a story behind the story. Often the burden is too heavy for families to carry alone. Active listening may not be enough if it is followed by inaction. Many people are already living beyond the edge, personally and financially, before a disaster strikes. While the destructive nature of disasters emphasizes the crucial importance of faith, family, and friends, the “art of hanging out” may not be enough. It is true that few victims want to be alone emotionally, spiritually, or physically in the aftermath of a disaster or tragedy. A holistic approach to ministry addresses every aspect of need during critical events. It is worth mentioning that professional church workers are often overlooked and overwhelmed when a disaster affects their community. They too can fall between the cracks, frequently with catastrophic career results.

The privilege of presence is an awesome responsibility as well as a call to action. In his insightful book, *Christ Have Mercy*, Rev. Matthew Harrison writes:

Disasters are not a time for “bait and switch” or “hidden agendas.” They are a time to be charitable, considerate, and a time to realize the people

affected are very vulnerable and must be treated with the utmost love and respect. This does not mean refusing to give “a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

And St. Peter continues, “yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Peter 3:16).

And there is nothing hidden! Lutherans are about faith in Christ and deeds to show Christ’s love and mercy. We openly confess that word and deed go together, as they did for Jesus Christ (Luke 5:17-26) and his apostles (Luke 9:2ff.) when they assisted those in need.”¹

This is where the power, privilege, and practice of presence converge to meet needs.

It is one thing to care about the needs of others; it is quite another thing to actually meet the needs of others.

The Practice of Presence

The privilege of presence naturally leads to the practice of presence. This occurs precisely at this intersection of greatest need, when emotional, spiritual, or physical needs must be addressed not only with Word but also with deed.

In disaster, first and foremost, Christian care sees to the basic needs of those affected: food, water, clothing, and shelter. This first line of care reflects the First Article of the creed, where God is the giver of “clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home,” family, property, and “all that I have.” Because every person, regardless of race, color, creed, or confession, is a precious creation of God, for whom He cares, Christian care provides disaster victims with what they need “to support this body and life.”²

To practice presence means to provide food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, shelter to the needy, healing to the sick, and comfort to the lonely (Matt. 25). It is a comprehensive approach to ministry that meets people at the point of their greatest need with caring, comfort, and concern.

The practice of presence assures the needy that they are not alone as they walk through what could otherwise be a lonesome valley. It is one thing to care about the needs of others; it is quite another thing to actually meet the needs of others.

Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish

you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do (James 2:15-18).

In both of the personal examples shared above, the needs of these families were addressed without delay with assistance for transitional housing, gift cards for food and clothing, dollars for urgent personal and medical needs, as well as pastoral care and counsel.

The call of the church is a call to action. The church does not refer the needy to others for assistance. Faith in action attaches momentous words to courageous deeds. God supplies the need when the church practices the presence of Christ in the midst of disaster and tragedy.

As a closing thought, Luther comments on the importance of the sacrament in our ministry of presence:

There your heart must go out in love and devotion and learn that this sacrament is a sacrament of love, and that love and service are given you and you again must render love and service to Christ and His needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the dishonor done to Christ in His holy Word, all the misery of Christendom, all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing: You must fight, work, pray and, if you cannot do more, have heartfelt sympathy. That is bearing in your turn the misfortune and adversity of Christ and His saints.³

Fight, work, pray is a good way to summarize what a ministry of presence is all about. Then, when you can't do anymore, have heartfelt sympathy for those in need. The power, privilege, and practice of presence always bring hope and help to the hurting.

Notes

¹ *Long-Term Recovery Manual*, (Arlington, VA: National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, Rev. 2004) 60.

² Matthew Harrison, *Christ Have Mercy*, (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2008) 142.

³ “Christian Care in Times of Disaster,” *A Training Manual for District Disaster Response Coordinators and Teams*, (St. Louis, MO: LCMS World Relief and Human Care, 2008) 23.

⁴ Martin Luther, “The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ, against the Brotherhoods,” *Luther's Works*, Vol. 35, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1960) 54.

Rev. Glenn F. Merritt, Jr. currently serves as the Director of Disaster Response for LCMS World Relief and Human Care. After completing seminary, Rev. Merritt served two years as an LCMS missionary in Sierra Leone, West Africa, before serving congregations in Miles City, MT (6 yrs), Midlothian, Texas (7 yrs) and Hamilton, MT (6 yrs).

Rev. Merritt duties include coordinating disaster response of LCMS World Relief and Human Care to both domestic and international events. Over the past two years Rev. Merritt has developed a comprehensive and coordinated disaster response initiative that includes training programs for Lutheran Early Response Teams and Congregation Preparedness.

In his duties, Rev. Merritt collaborates with Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), LCMS Districts and congregations, and numerous other governmental and nongovernmental disaster response agencies.

In addition, he has completed FEMA and American Red Cross training in disaster response and incident management as well as National Incident Management System (NIMS) disaster management courses offered by the Department of Homeland Security.

Prior to entering the ministry Rev. Merritt was a police officer in Montana and Wyoming where he received critical incident response training from the Montana Law Enforcement Academy, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).

Rev. Merritt was also a certified EMT and a licensed K-9 handler with special training in explosives detection and body recovery.

These broad experiences and trainings enable Rev. Merritt to adapt and respond quickly to changing needs in disaster settings. Rev. Merritt currently works from his home in Arlington, Texas, traveling widely to provide onsite assessments and training throughout the US. Rev. Merritt and his wife Linda have been married 40 years and are blessed with five children and five grandchildren.

Pastoral Theology and Disaster Response Lament, Interrogation, and Reclamation as a Model for Response

More disasters will occur. Some smaller and perhaps some will be greater. As people of God, what will our response be?

I remember being in New York after 9/11. I was with the “Ambiguous Loss Project” team from the University of Minnesota helping to provide care and counseling for some individuals who had witnessed the planes crashing into the World Trade Buildings. I was able to listen to the stories of some New Yorkers and the reactions of those whom I heard (both formal and informally) were diverse.

The critique of the public reaction to that event was interesting. While many spoke of the tragedy, the loss of many lives, and the anger of the act of destruction, many others spoke of how interesting it was that many people of color experience such devastation on a regular basis. The question too that was raised was, “where are the grief counselors and the therapists to work with our children when they walk through disaster areas on a daily basis”?

Notwithstanding these critiques by those who experience death and dying and suffering at a disproportionate amount - these our sisters and brothers of the darker hue - it still remains that the world community, and pastoral theologians in particular ought to look anew the issue of Pastoral Care in a time of Natural Catastrophes.

Pastoral Theology of Disaster Response

A presentation at the Society of Pastoral Theology conference on Pastoral care in a Time of Catastrophic Natural Disaster, by Dr. Larry Graham of Illif School of Theology, stated that “lives diminished by catastrophic disaster can only be sustained by lamentation, interrogation of the social, moral, and cosmic order, and then reclaimed by an enduring strategic outpouring of justice-based communal, political, economic, and spiritual assistance over time.” I will attempt to show how these categories of activities proposed may be actualized.

I write from the perspective of being an Assistant to the Bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with my former portfolio being that of coordinator for Pastoral Care for the Katrina Recovery on the Coast of Mississippi. This was an initiative of the Southeastern Synod’s response to the devastation that occurred in our synod.

It was only two days after Hurricane Katrina that



my husband Richard died. During the Christmas holiday I decided to go to Mississippi so I might divert my attention away from my own personal grief to that of public grief in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. I had lived a year on the Gulf Coast as an intern and was quite familiar with the

“lives diminished by catastrophic disaster can only be sustained by lamentation”

area. This familiarity with the community, my therapeutic and theological training in Marriage and Family Therapy and Pastoral Care and Counseling and the nature of my denominational affiliation allowed me to help provide and coordinate Pastoral Care to this area of the country that had been overlooked in the media. People whose lives had been turned upside down by the Hurricane Katrina whose eye actually hit the State of Mississippi was my new congregation.

“Lamentation”

The country was lamenting. Many of the victims of Katrina have long been forgotten. The country, at

that time, was sad to see and hear of the devastation and they were volunteering in tremendous numbers. The country's lament was being responded to by many people eager and excited about helping. Most volunteers went to New Orleans. Others went to the coast of Mississippi. They went to assist. Some stayed for months. Some others do not return home. One might ask the question too "what did that mean that some people stayed in a place of disaster?"

Many volunteers appear to be mesmerized by the sights. Trees lined the beach in the heat of a Mississippi Spring. Trees that were then void of life, yet standing strong ashy and burned. The volunteers viewed slabs of concrete where houses used to be, perhaps wondering about the life and family that was. The volunteers also saw people busy living lives as if nothing has happened and wondering "how could this be?"

But while I was seeing and hearing the country's lament, (though there were soon groaning in this country – those who quickly grew tired of hearing about Katrina) there were many people who had personally experienced the disaster, still too numb to grieve or to lament. While they were facing the circumstances of how to rebuild their homes, for many, the emotional losses could not be faced. Many of the survivors of Katrina that I met a year and even two out from the disaster, were in a place of simply attempting to survive; to figure out how to deal with their insurance companies; how to be grateful for a FEMA trailer since prior to that going from shelter to shelter was the only option for some; how to begin to put their lives back together. These survivors of Katrina did not have the time or perhaps even the luxury to look at their emotional losses. The emotional toll it has taken on some could only be guessed, as from outside appearances, the people were okay. As one person describes,

"It is like what happened to some of the houses that are standing and appear to be strong. The water surged, it comes and floods the houses and then the water subsided. There was much damaged because of the surge and the work that was to be was to muck out the house. While the shell of the house was still there, appearing as if nothing has happened, the house was a disaster."

That is how it was with many of the people – the shell of the person was still there. They may have looked fine; they however were yet still damaged by the storm.

While, I believe there was *some* lament; perhaps some silent lament - lament in how to figure out a new way of life; how to make sense out of the increasing number of suicides, sudden recurrence of cancer, and sudden death of elders, in my estimation - much of the lament was put aside while individuals and families operated first in a survival mode.

"Interrogation"

For some in the community, there was no nation-

wide corporate lament. There was no cry of concern for "the least of these."

Vera's move after the weeks in a shelter was into a FEMA trailer. Vera lived there for more than two years. She wanted to rebuild her home, but the insurance claim would not cover the cost. How could this be? Because she was retired with minimal income, Vera could also not obtain a loan. She needed to have a job. She finally obtained a position working as a case manager for Lutheran Disaster Response.

Is this how we treat our elders?

But Vera would also not move from her FEMA trailer because her next-door neighbors in the trailer park were Mr. and Mrs. Brookens. The Brookens were an 80 year old couple. Mrs. Brookens had been her Sunday School teacher years ago and Mr. Brookens had been the first African American local school board superintendent. Their home too had been destroyed by Katrina and they were looking for assistance to help build a home. A Lutheran church in Pennsylvania contributed to this cause. A local church donated some land. But volunteers were needed to do the labor. And three years after Katrina, the Brookens were still living in a FEMA trailer. Would they live out their final days in the FEMA trailer park?

Vera finally decided that she had to leave and it was fortunate that she did, for unbeknownst to her, Mr. Brookens was dying of cancer. Indeed he would spend his last days residing in the trailer before a local hospital stay where he died. Vera, in her new home provided a place for Mrs. Brookens to rest her head and a place to grieve after her husband's death. Is this how we treat our elders?

Homes built on stilts; homes built with elevators because they had to be so many feet above sea level; These homes built for seniors who were fearful of using the elevators. Children's health diminished. Children who were living in contaminated FEMA trailers for months. Chronic coughs. Loss of time in school. Children in the rural parts of the coast, in a state that was already ranked 49 or 50 in the effectiveness of public education. Is this how we care for our children? And the list of unjust action and response goes on. Ethical issues uncovered by examining the response to Katrina.

In the FEMA hearings that went on we heard about how organizations meant to provide service and care were not appropriately prepared for the disaster. What did and does this mean from an ethical and theological perspective? From what I can see this is a question that indeed has to be examined. I asked a group of young teens at a youth event soon after Katrina "what happens now to the homeless that were homeless BEFORE Katrina?" "What is

our social, moral, and as applicable here, a Pastoral Response?" One young lady suggested that we keep doing what we have been doing. I don't know what she meant by that but it is something to think about. But it also pushes us especially those who proclaim that we love God and God's people. They go beyond the simple answer to attempt to uncover areas of inquiry relevant to our citizenship in God's kingdom with answers that would move toward more appropriate ethical responses and action in disaster situation similar to that of Katrina as well as to the questions posed earlier in this paper after 9/11.

"Reclamation"

Fortunately some theologians, professors, researchers, volunteers, and students, did go to the coast to "see" and to "hear the questions in order to develop appropriate responses. A professor of Pastoral Care after a few weeks of wrestling theologically and theoretically with a pastoral response to the disaster brought a group of students to the coast to "listen" to the stories of the people attempting to apply some of their hearings and observations to the questions posed, hopefully wrestling too with what Dr. Graham says is "the limitations of our settled beliefs about God especially when our beliefs are questioned by the horrors and consequences of catastrophic disasters - issues of injustice, and that of forgiveness (Graham, 2006).

With the work Post-Katrina, Lutheran Disaster Response and the Southeastern Synod, knowing that the response and the work that was being done would eventually have to be replaced with the efforts of those who resided in the community that action was taken. Many churches responded long before the government and other agencies. Churches and pastors did the best that they could do. But those sacred spaces, and the pastoral leaders were traumatized too and the need for some pastoral assistance and respite was great. There was also a need for what Dr. Graham called, a "justice-based communal response. What this is calling for is a rebuilding of lives on a newly structured foundation and the reclaiming of life by a strategic outpouring of justice-based communal, political, economic, and spiritual assistance. The work of the Mississippi Interfaith Disaster Taskforce is an example of that kind of work.

An Example of Injustice Addressed: The People Before Ports Campaign

The Mississippi Development Authority two years after Katrina announced plans to redirect \$600 million dollars from Community Development Block Grant money earlier promised for housing grants to expand the ports on the coast of Mississippi. The Interfaith Disaster Taskforce (IDTF) in conjunction with area ministers and other non-profit agencies launched a campaign to keep the \$600 million in housing and to lift up the needs of those who had not

been able to rebuild or recover from the storm. These were the homes of the most vulnerable citizens on the coast – the disabled, the elderly, low-income families. Unfortunately the Campaign failed. Yet attention was brought to the issue of justice and the collaborative work continues to rebuild the lives of the people most disproportionately

But those sacred spaces, and the pastoral leaders were traumatized too and the need for some pastoral assistance and respite was great.

impacted by the disaster. Today, the Mississippi IDTF, though financially struggling, serves as the core of the collaborative work with non-profits, mental health, service agencies, colleges and universities, in addressing the injustices that are uncovered in inquiry and assisting in the rebuilding of lives for the people on the coast of Mississippi.

Summary

With time gone by, Hurricane Katrina has left the front pages of the newspapers. The eagerness of the volunteers has subsided some. The effect of the disaster on the lives of people who experienced Hurricane Katrina as well as 9/11 have for some been forgotten - but not for the victims and the survivors. The work of healing is still so very much needed. As I suggested earlier, the lament, in my estimation, especially the lament of those who are still raising the question after these two major disasters, "*how long?*" is really just beginning. The interrogation of what happened has not fully been examined though I am guessing that researchers will write about this for years to come. But our ethical and reclamation and restorative response is needed now more than ever before. More disasters will occur. Some smaller and perhaps some will be greater. As people of God, what will our response be? This three-fold process of lament, interrogation, and justice-oriented reclamation could be used as a model.

End-notes

This article here is based in part to a response to the keynote address of Dr. Larry Graham "Pastoral Theology and Catastrophic Disaster", presented at the Society of Pastoral Theology in Columbine, Colorado, 2006.

For information on the Ambiguous Loss Project visit: www.ambiguousloss.com

For information on the Mississippi Interfaith Disaster Task-Force visit: www.msidthf.org

The Rev. Beverly Wallace is currently the Assistant to the Bishop for candidacy and leadership in the Southeastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Wallace holds a Bachelors Degree in Social Welfare from Adelphi University, a Masters of Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a Master of Divinity from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary and a Ph.D. in Family Social Science with an emphasis in Marriage and Family at the University of Minnesota. She was ordained in 1999 and was the Associate Pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Atlanta and Redeemer Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, MN.

Before her return to the Southeastern Synod, Rev. Wallace to be Assistant to the Bishop for Pastoral Care for Katrina Recovery on the Coast of Mississippi, Dr. Wallace, held a pre-doctoral fellowship at Elon University where she taught counseling. Prior to that, she was the Chaplain for Vocation at Hamline University where she also taught in the Religion Department and in the area of Social Justice. She also taught at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, United Theological Seminary in New Brighton, MN and at Lutheran Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC. She has co-authored several articles and is the co-author of the book African American Grief, published by Bronner-Routledge, 2005.

The Rev. Dr. Beverly Wallace is the mother of two adult educators and grandmother of grandson Jaylen, She is a Native New Yorker though she now resides in Douglasville, GA.

Valley of Bones

Being able to victoriously face the unimaginable requires advance preparation, as well as ongoing reliance on God.

The caustic smoke still billowed from portions of the Boeing 747 scattered across the rugged hills that comprise the center of Guam's thirty miles. Eventually, we learned that 228 of the 254 souls aboard the plane had perished. But for now, there remained hope that yet another survivor might be rescued. The proud tail, bearing the emblem of Korean Air Lines, stood tall and eerily stately as it rose from the jumbled brush and scorched earth. But where was the rest of the aircraft? The smoking debris and mangled pieces of still recognizable metal provided the hazy beacons. After the shortest of briefings, we grabbed the collapsed stretchers and negotiated our way down a steep rope line to the wreckage below.

“The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.” (Ezekiel 37:1, NIV)



One of our roles as clergy is to immerse ourselves in the lives of those who are dying. We aid those who are relinquishing their grasp on a life, which has reached its end. And even after they let go, in the wake of death we continue our ministry of pointing to the resurrection. We help the survivors see that physical death is not really the end at all.

Walking with people through the valley of the shadow of death is not a burden. Most of us discover it to be a genuine privilege. To contend with humanity's nemeses, death and dying, is an honor. Frequently, these engagements occur at bedside in clinical settings. And in ideal cases, they transpire when a believer has completed a full and meaningful life. Yet, there are radically different contexts where we stand in faith against the specters of despair. Such is the case when we are enlisted to respond to disasters.

Along with Father Raul Sanchez, our Catholic priest, I volunteered to join the search and recovery effort. As we began our ministry at the crash site, my good friend noted that according to the Roman calendar, it was the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord.

Facing the Unimaginable

The accident occurred at 1:42 am. Pilot error caused the jet to crash into a hill named in honor of Admiral Nimitz, a hero of Guam's liberation from Japanese occupation. Firefighters formed the core of the initial responders, and in the darkness they were able to miraculously rescue a score of survivors. This “search and rescue” team was swiftly replaced by a

larger “search and recovery” effort. Father Sanchez and I assumed our place in the ranks of the searchers. We were informed that as we first spread out, we might still find survivors, but sadly, such was not to be the case. While the “traditional” role for clergy lies with debriefings (e.g. CISM) for survivors and caregivers, the two of us desired to leave that important function to junior hands as we girded ourselves to perform dramatically different duties.

Walking with people through the valley of the shadow of death is not a burden. Most of us discover it to be a genuine privilege.

“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:9-11, NIV)

Just as God prepares circumstances in which he desires us to serve, we in turn strive to ready ourselves so that we might not be found wanting. (Why else would we spend four precious years of our too-brief lives in seminary?)

One reason Father Sanchez and I felt confident in our ability to face this challenge was due to our military training. Inherent in military education is preparation for unexpected and violent contingencies. Similar instruction is available for civilian dis-

aster respondents, and anyone who hopes to truly be equipped to minister effectively in this context needs to avail themselves of it. Providentially, Father Sanchez had completed a year-long Clinical Pastoral Education program immediately prior to his Guam assignment. Even with that background, he assessed he was only “about 55% prepared for a mass casualty response.”

Being able to victoriously face the unimaginable requires advance preparation, as well as ongoing reliance on God.

Becoming One with the Caregivers

Following the first long day, we divided the team, volunteers all, into two nine hour shifts. Very few officers joined the “hands on” search and recovery teams. It was our duty to place the burned and mangled bodies in ebony bags and to carry the remains on drab olive stretchers to the temporary morgue. Most of the airmen who stepped forward to assume these duties were quite young, and few knew what to expect. Even those specifically trained in mortuary affairs faced an overwhelming trial that would transform their lives.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3, NIV)

Most enlisted troops remain somewhat “on their guard” around officers. Although chaplains stand outside of their command chain, we face the added wariness that many have for those who represent the “holy.” Military chaplains know better than most how conversations can change dramatically when someone in the group spies a cross approaching. Because we constitute a vague sort of “religious” talisman, we are often relegated to the “outside.”

Not so, however, when your gloved hands are among the first to reach out to touch that thing from which every instinct cries “withdraw!” As in the combat zone, where warriors respect the courage of chaplains serving in their midst, it did not take long for every member of the teams to regard their chaplain as one of them. From that precious vantage point, we were able to accomplish much. Beyond performing the same somber duties as our teammates, we spent time talking individually with each and every one of them. And those conversations were invaluable. In addition to countless discussions of faith and mortality, we offered “permission” to those volunteers utterly overwhelmed by the setting to return to their regular duties, away from the crash site. I recall more than one heavily muscled airman troubled by the ability of some petite woman to take the awfulness in stride while he could not.

Earning the complete trust of the members of our team placed us in the perfect position to offer the encouragement, hope and forgiveness they required.

Acknowledging Our Own Vulnerabilities

Most the bodies were badly disfigured by the flames which engulfed the plane when it crashed. In fact, many of them were essentially “consumed” by the raging fire. Gathering the charred remains was oddly surreal; one knew just hours earlier these had been vibrant human beings, but their current state made that fact seem very remote. There was one exception though . . . at least for me. Resting in what would have been a window seat, was the body of a beautiful young Korean girl. Two things caused me

Earning the complete trust of the members of our team placed us in the perfect position to offer the encouragement, hope and forgiveness they required.

to pause for a long moment in her shadow. First, her body appeared as though it had been completely missed by the flames. She looked like she could have walked uninjured from the crash, until you drew closer and saw that her legs had been pinned by the collapse of the seat in front of her. The second reason I froze in my tracks was because this victim appeared to be the same age as my own fifteen year old daughter.

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:8-10, NIV)

God called Joshua to be courageous. However, it was to be a valor established not upon his own virtues but on God’s presence and strength. When we minister in turbulent and emotionally draining contexts, we must beware of the danger of thinking we can handle whatever comes. Trusting in our training, our innate ability, or anything other than Christ, sets us up for disappointment. Not necessarily a catastrophic failure, but a failure to serve as effectively as we might. As Father Sanchez says, the essential beginning point is “having a true relationship with the Lord, yourself, family and those you serve.”

Even when the response to the disaster has unfolded well, we need to remain vigilant. I had already transferred a number of bodies, and begun to think “I can do this.” Precisely at that moment, the face of this teenager stunned me. I could do nothing more than stand right there, catching my emotional and spiritual breath. The fact is that we never—in and of ourselves—possess sufficient resources to deal with these matters in a healthy way. We must rely on our Lord. While we are engaged in the disaster, and for weeks and months afterward, we also

need to take advantage of our own support network. God placed these family, friends and professionals in our lives as one of his tools for supporting our health.

Returning to a “Normal” Life

After nearly two weeks focused on the somber task of recovering human remains from the jagged ruins of a once mighty aircraft, we completed the task. Families had gathered from afar to view the site where their loved ones died. Some cried out in Hangul, “If I could only touch the ashes that would be enough for me.” Eventually an engraved marble obelisk would be erected in memory of the many victims.

Each day when I returned home on the bus I cleansed my boots with bleach and abundant water. The mud through which we trudged at the crash site was contaminated by fuel, and worse. I threw my uniform into the washer, wishing there were a setting more searing than “hot.” On this final trip home, the team leader informed us that we were all to “retire” (dispose of) our boots; new ones would be issued to us the next day. I wasn’t sorry to be rid of those boots; I don’t believe they could ever truly be clean again.

“Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.” (Isaiah 9:5, NIV)

What a vivid image. The Hebrew soldiers were to physically destroy all of their garments contaminated by the gore of war. But this act is not merely practical; it is also symbolic. Just as our contaminated boots were no longer fit for service, their destruction marked a visual break with the past. And new equipment, for modern and ancient warriors alike, revealed a fresh beginning, a return to other, less bloody pursuits. Coincidentally, a powerful promise of future hope immediately follows the verse cited above: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...”

Assessing the Value of Our Presence

The rather unique participation of chaplains was not lost on the teams. While some were initially uncertain about us joining them, they quickly appreciated us being with them. At some point or another virtually every individual expressed their personal gratitude for our involvement. What we had faced together was grim. Father Sanchez says, “The tragedy transformed my life and left scars that still remain. Once we finished with that task I was sick physically, emotionally. Smell, tears, nightmares were some of the results.” It’s no accident that he mentions smells first in his list. Putrefaction occurs swiftly in the humidity of a near-equatorial rain forest. That was merely one of the reasons fueling the urgency of our work. The desire to provide loved ones with the fullest possible accounting of the lost, at the earliest possible moment, was another.

Nearly twelve years later, I occasionally catch a scent that transports me back to Nimitz Hill. For me, the olfactory triggers have proven stronger than the visual reminders. Like my good friend, I too had been “transformed.” The chaplain who climbed down the long rope line that first morning was not the pastor who offered a silent prayer over the crash site as we completed our duties two weeks later.

By the grace of God, I was privileged to help bring a divine and healing aroma to that somber graveyard. No sermons were required. It was enough to simply speak to others in humility with sincerity, like someone sent by a loving God.

Like each of the team members who grew close to one another as we shared the harsh experience, I participated in regular debriefings. I found it a bit disconcerting; I struggled to view myself as a participant, finding it difficult to suppress my innate desire to help facilitate the healing of others. Experiencing the awkwardness of being a *recipient* of crisis intervention ministry was a lesson in itself.

For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? ...in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God. (2 Corinthians 2:15-17, NIV)

Odors are powerful things. The camphor we poured into our masks did little to cover the smell of death which pervaded the scene. However, the redeeming thing about smells is that they are not only associated with traumatic memories. In truth, most often they are linked to caressing recollections of our past. To modern ears, Paul’s analogy may sound strange; to people close to the earth, it rings true. We Christians are a holy “aroma” to those around us. Whether that scent is fragrant or malodorous depends upon people’s response to the good news.

As I recall my ministry as a chaplain in the aftermath of this disaster, I am comforted by the knowledge that Father Sanchez and I plainly represented God’s merciful presence to those beside whom we labored. And it was communicated without preaching. There was no need to remind anyone of their mortality—for that was painted vividly on the canvas before us. What was needed, was a message of hope, “the fragrance of life.” By the grace of God, I was privileged to help bring a divine and healing

aroma to that somber graveyard. No sermons were required. It was enough to simply speak to others in humility with sincerity, like someone sent by a loving God.

Sidebar: Accident Details

On August 6, 1997 Korean Air Flight 801 crashed while on approach to Antonio B. Won Pat International Airport, Guam. Of the 254 people on board, 228 perished due to the accident. Thirty-one survivors were found at the scene, although five later died due to their injuries, including all four severely burned passengers who were transported to the United States Army Burn Center in Texas.

On August 13, fifty protesters staged a sit-in at Guam Airport, upset that the recovery of the dead was taking so long. They sat on the floor at the Korean Air counter while the meticulous recovery efforts were winding down.

On the third anniversary of the crash, a black marble memorial was unveiled on the crash site. The story of this tragic flight is portrayed in “Final Approach,” a 2006 episode of “Mayday: Air Disasters.”

Robert Stroud is an LCMS pastor who retired from military service after a quarter century as an Air Force chaplain. Fortunately, far more of his ministry in the armed forces focused on life, and its preservation, than on death. He graduated from Luther Seminary, and received an M.Th. in Patristics from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. He oversees www.ScriptoriumNovum.com. His e-mail address is: chaplain-stroud@gmail.com.

Lutherans Bend But Don't Break!

By reflecting on how and why the church is resilient, church leaders can work to make the church even more resilient and not just survive hardship, but thrive through it.

Tough times can come in many forms. Economic hardship, disaster, and unexpected losses are just a few of the challenges that can affect a church. But the church has endured all these and worse in its history, and it's still here!

Another way of saying that something is resilient is that it bends but doesn't break. The church is resilient. It has encountered every variety of hardship and endured. In fact, sometimes it has actually flourished and grown during hard times. By reflecting on how and why the church is resilient, church leaders can work to make the church even more resilient and not just survive hardship, but thrive through it.

Following are some hallmarks of resilience that the church exhibits. Congregations, pastors, districts, synods, and other church institutions can examine these hallmarks and consider how they may be bolstered in your ministry. Perhaps your ministry exhibits these hallmarks already. Perhaps your ministry exhibits some of these hallmarks, but could use some help developing more. In so doing, you will be helping make your church more resilient and more able to weather storms and strife of every kind. If you can identify further hallmarks of resilience, please share them with us so that we can include them here and help each other build ever more resilient churches!

Focus on mission

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

The church has a particular mission, a particular reason for being. We believe that we are called to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world. This Good News transforms all of creation. This mission has been lived out in the church on every continent for centuries. This mission has been lived out in every manner of human-built structure, this mission has been lived out with no human-built structure anywhere in sight!

When we focus on our mission and reflect continuously about who we are and what it is we are called to do, we can be more creative in imagining how we can live out that mission regardless of economic circumstances or natural disaster or unforeseen barrier.



Consider for your ministry: How focused on our mission are we? Do we frequently brainstorm how we can do our mission in ever more creative ways?

Planning for the unforeseen

"Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." Proverbs 16:3

Sometimes the way that they weather the problem can wind up very different than how they envisioned they would act in the drawn-up plans, but it is the act of planning that makes organizations nimble and responsive to handle any kind of crisis.

When a crisis of any kind occurs, whether an economic downturn, disaster, or other unforeseen event, organizations which have drawn up plans and policies for how they will respond weather the crisis more smoothly. Sometimes the way that they weather the problem can wind up very different than how they envisioned they would act in the drawn-up plans, but it is the act of planning that makes organizations nimble and responsive to handle any kind

of crisis.

Consider for your ministry: Have we done disaster preparedness planning for our congregation? Have we identified people to fill important roles in the event that the regular people are unavailable? What are the kinds of crises that could affect us in the future?

Keeping a sense of perspective

“Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” 1 Corinthians 15:58

When dealing with loss and crisis, resilient organizations keep a sense of perspective. They do not permit themselves to either minimize or hyperbolize the loss or crisis. They realistically examine what the conditions are, and they make sober decisions accordingly. Intentionally not minimizing a crisis can mean sometimes boldly confronting the need to not do business as usual. Likewise, intentionally not hyperbolizing a crisis can mean not making rash or abrupt decisions needlessly.

On a personal level, one can reflect, “what hardships have I faced in the past?” “How did I endure past challenges and setbacks?” “How can those memories guide me in confronting current challenges?”

Consider for your ministry: What are our processes in our congregation for assessing realistically the effects of a crisis? How can we make sure we are listening to all the right voices when learning what is happening?

Focus on grassroots

“But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” 1 Corinthians 12:25-26

The church has not endured for centuries because of the leadership in its capitols of administration. Whether Rome, Constantinople, Canterbury, St. Louis, or Chicago, the church endures, grows, and flourishes because the local expressions of its ministry endure, grow, and flourish.

Focus on grassroots is just as important however for congregational leaders and pastors as it is for denominational leaders. Likewise a congregation doesn't endure, grow, or flourish because the leaders or pastors make it so, it endures, grows, and flourishes because members and worshippers live out the mission in their day to day lives and make the congregation a center of that mission in their lives.

On a practical level, congregations should arrange to train numerous people in all the necessary elements of your church building. Do only one or two people know how the boiler works and where its

maintenance contract information is? In an emergency that may not be enough.

Consider for your ministry: Is our leadership too centralized? Can more than one person do the necessary functions of our ministry?

One beautiful thing our liturgy does is helps us worship and rejoice even when we may not feel worshipful and joyful when we are going through tough times.

Fostering of diversity

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

There is growing concern that a loss of genetic diversity in crops may heighten the risk that a single disease could wipe out a whole crop. Genetic diversity is important to keep species resistant to disease. By comparison, resilient churches foster diversity in every way they can. Diversity brings with it enhanced creativity and nimbleness in solving problems. Different perspectives and different backgrounds and different cultures bring fresh ways to approach any challenge.

Consider for your ministry: Do we have every viewpoint and perspective necessary in our leadership to solve problems creatively?

Focus on the positive

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

One beautiful thing our liturgy does is helps us worship and rejoice even when we may not feel worshipful and joyful when we are going through tough times. This is a hallmark of resilience, to focus on the positive and keep our eyes on the future especially when times are tough. This can mean intentionally thinking about things that are not fearful, and carefully assessing whether feelings of fear are well founded or reactionary.

On a practical level, preachers should attend always to how a word of hope and encouragement is kept central in the life of the congregation. That word of hope and encouragement is the word that worshippers carry out into their own missions and ministries in their day to day lives.

Draw upon your own personal, family, and congregational stories. Recall how you persevered and

endured through tough times in the past. This bolsters us and helps us see a bright future.

Consider for your ministry: Is our congregation a positive place? Do we share a word of hope at all times? How can the liturgy and preaching of our church be directed to uplift hope?

Focus on the communion of faith

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” Hebrews 12:1

Resilient people and organizations nurture relationships and connections with other people and organizations. This provides for greater capacity for coping with a variety of challenges. Further, the resilient church reflects that it is surrounded by a cloud of witnesses gone before as well as those who surround us now. We can draw on the experiences and stories of those gone before for guidance on today’s difficulties.

Consider for your ministry: How have the struggles of our past taught us lessons we can apply today. Are there relationships with other churches and organizations that we can strengthen to help us now and in the future?

Rev. Kevin Massey, BBC, completed a Master of Divinity at Luther Seminary (St. Paul, Minn.) in 1993 and served as pastor at Lutheran congregations in North Dakota, Minnesota, and Illinois.

Kevin is a Board Certified Chaplain, with the Association of Professional Chaplains, and he worked as a trauma chaplain and spiritual care trainer with Advocate Health Care (Chicago, Ill.) from 1999 until 2005. During his time with Advocate, Kevin worked extensively in the field of Disaster Spiritual Care, serving as a volunteer administrator and trainer with the American Red Cross and with Church World Service, including service at Ground Zero in New York City in the fall of 2001 and for the 2005 response to Hurricane Katrina.

Rev. Massey joined Lutheran Disaster Response in late 2005 and became the national director in late 2007. He is a member of the National VOAD Emotional and Spiritual Care committee and was the principle author of the 2006 National VOAD resource on disaster spiritual care, entitled “Light Our Way.”

The Day the Bridge Fell Down

Be still and know that I am God.

We had just finished a funeral service at Grace University Lutheran Church, located on the University of Minnesota campus. It was a Wednesday, and I went to my office to work on my sermon for the upcoming Sunday. The church phone kept ringing, and for a while I ignored it so that I could focus on my sermon. Finally, I reluctantly picked up the phone.

It was one of our parishioners who had left right after the funeral calling to tell us that the 35W Bridge had just collapsed into the Mississippi River. After a few rounds of “you’re kidding” and “which bridge again?,” I grabbed Pastor Mary Halvorson and we went to find a TV. The images were overwhelming. We decided to go to the Red Cross Center as soon as possible, to see how we could help. Showing my hospital name badge, I told first responders I was a hospital chaplain and we were able to get through the perimeter. I knew from prior training that I was not supposed to do this, that I was supposed to wait to be activated. Adrenaline kicked in, however, and the decision was made.

While Pastor Mary and I were walking down Washington Avenue, I received a phone call that there had been a bus on the bridge when it collapsed. As Mary and I looked over to where the bridge had been, we held hands and prayed for strength, not knowing what we were walking into. As we neared the Red Cross Center, we noticed several ambulances, many of which were leaving empty, without lights or sirens. I immediately remembered an article I had read after 9/11 that talked about people at hospitals waiting to help victims, but none showed up, as most of the victims had died. Pictures flashed through my mind of hospital personnel standing outside, with gurneys and supplies, but no patients. I squeezed Mary’s hand tighter, thinking, “this can’t be good if they’re leaving empty. Where are all the victims? It’s rush hour!”

The chaos of the Red Cross building was overwhelming. Two days before the collapse, I had just taken HICS (Hospital Incident Command Structure) training at the MN Dept of Health. I knew that there should be an incident commander, there should be a family center, there should have been a lot of things . . . what there was, however, was a lot of children . . . everywhere . . . I didn’t understand why there were so many children there without their parents. Sizing things up for a few moments, I found the man I thought was the incident commander, I calmly told him that I was there to set up a Family Assistance Center and that I was a hospital chaplain. When I asked him if he was the incident commander, he



looked at me like I was from another planet. He had blood on his paramedic uniform, was sweating profusely, and said, “Why don’t you take that room over there?” I found some Red Cross volunteers and told them I needed water, paper, pens, and Kleenex. I also asked the folks at the front desk to send in kids who had been triaged and were okay, and to send in parents.

Each child was reacting in his own way, some were crying, some were playing, some were talking, others looked expectantly at the door every time it opened, and some had that dazed, distant look of shock.

A few kids were brought into the room, but wouldn’t stay inside because they wanted to know what was going on with their friends. It was at that point that I realized no one was going to utilize my fine family center. I looked around and wondered, “what now?” This is what I’d been trained to do. No one is paying attention to the HICS model. This isn’t how it’s supposed to go! I watched as Pastor Mary sat on the floor with some of the kids and just

started talking to them. “Be still and know that I am God” went through my mind. I looked around and found some children that didn’t have any adults with them; I went to talk to them. I learned they had been on the bus coming back from a field trip to a water park. Each child was reacting in his own way, some were crying, some were playing, some were talking, others looked expectantly at the door every time it opened, and some had that dazed, distant look of shock.

As a doctor rounded up the next group of kids to go to the hospital to get checked out, he tapped the little girl on the shoulder I had been talking to. She started to cry harder and yelled, “No!” As I watched the little girl look around for someone she knew, I asked her, “Will you go to the hospital if I go with you?” Her bottom lip came out and she meekly said, “Yes.” As we (volunteers) brought six children out to an ambulance there were TV cameras in our faces. The chaos outside the Red Cross building was even worse than that inside. Parents were trying to enter the building to see their children. Children were trying to run out of the building when they saw their parents. The volunteers had the building “locked down” tight, making sure they had children’s names correct and their location correct. During this time, I tried to stay in touch with the Nursing Supervisor at Mercy Hospital. Cell phone reception was spotty at best. I had been trained that in the event of a disaster, Mercy was to be my first priority.

I stayed with my little friend until her family could get to the hospital to be with her. At that point, I was stranded at North Memorial Hospital and had no idea how I would get back to my church and my vehicle. I called a chaplain friend from CPE, who works there and she graciously agreed to come get me. We took a circuitous route toward church, hoping to stay out of the way of first responders.

We had just gotten back to Grace when Karla’s boss called to tell her she needed to report to the Holiday Inn Metrodome because the Red Cross was setting up a Family Assistance Center (FAC) there. She asked her boss if I could also come to help and he said yes. Actually, my first day of orientation was on 9/11 . . . Karla and I were together for 9/11 and we thought it appropriate that we were together for the bridge collapse.

The FAC was not as chaotic. There were not many families present. Karla and I walked in as one family had just found out their loved one was alive and waiting for them at Hennepin County Medical Center. Our job was to answer phone calls from those who could not find their loved ones. We wrote down pertinent information for the database Red Cross was compiling and provided comfort and support. I prayed with one woman on the phone who could not find her sister. Karla took a call from someone overseas, who heard the news and couldn’t find a family member. We stayed at the FAC until 2:00 A.M.

Some things I learned along the way:

- don’t just “show up” to a disaster sight (wait to be called) – if I hadn’t had my hospital credentials I doubt the police would have let me in
- knowing how an “organizational chart” is SUPPOSED to work, probably won’t matter in the

Knowing how an “organizational chart” is SUPPOSED to work, probably won’t matter in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

immediate aftermath of a disaster.

- “Be still and know that I am God.”
- it takes a long time to “rebound” after a disaster.
- don’t try to be a hero, ask for help from colleagues, family, and friends.
- be present right where you are.
- Constructive Theology and Church History courses aren’t all that handy at a disaster sight - Bible classes and pastoral care classes are
- God is everywhere.
- don’t rely on cell phones, their systems can get overloaded and jammed (have a family communications plan so you know how to get a hold of each other) – I called my sister in Arizona and asked her to call the rest of the family to let them know I was okay (I figured the phone lines here would be jammed, and they were).
- make sure you get debriefed before leaving a disaster site.
- after a traumatic event, people don’t “go back to normal” they move to a “new normal.”

Rev. Jodi Barry has been a chaplain at Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids, MN, for six years. Jodi is on the hospital’s Emergency Preparedness committee, as well as the Metro Compact Behavioral Response Committee, as well as a certified trainer in Psychological First Aid (PFA). Jodi would like to encourage all pastors and chaplains to become a part of their city/county/state Medical Reserve Corps (for those in Minnesota go to www.mnresponds.org).

New and noteworthy

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW

The Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee for LCMS and ELCA Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors and Clinical Pastoral Educators Announces

Zion XIV

October 21-14, 2010

Simpsonwood Retreat Center
Norcross, GA

Conference Theme: “Firm Foundations – Theological Challenges of Pastoral Care in Contemporary Specialized Ministries”

Special Guests and Presenters: LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick and ELCA Bishop Mark Hanson

Plenary Speaker: Dr. Frederick A. Niedner, Valparaiso University

Bible Study Leader: The Rev. Shauna Kay Hannan is assistant professor of homiletics at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC. She is a graduate of Concordia College, Moorhead, MN, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN, and (will receive/received) a Ph.D. in homiletics from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ.

Southern Theological Seminary, Columbia, SC

Call for Workshops: As related to the theme, you are invited to submit workshop ideas and/or obtain workshop proposal forms from Ben Moravitz at moravitz@bellsouth.net.

The liturgical Jazz Ensemble from Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Atlanta will be present for worship.

Thrivent will partner with the two church bodies in providing assistance to meeting the goals of Zion XIV.

Look for more details and registration early in 2010.

GIVE SOMETHING BACK SCHOLARSHIP

The next deadline for this joint Lutheran scholarship fund is August 15th. The awards will then be made in November. Scholarship funds are awarded to individuals seeking ecclesiastical endorsement and certification/credentialing in ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education. The fund has a corpus of \$146,896.44 with grants totaling \$6000.00 per year (\$3000.00) semi-annually.) More information and application forms are available on both the ELCA and LCMS web-pages.



AGING WITH GRACE

The Northeast Forum on Spirituality and Aging seeks persons with a passion for ministry to, by, and with older adults to contribute: book reviews, reports on ministry ideas, programs, materials, meditations, both informal and academic papers, articles of interest, poetry, liturgies, and blog discussions.

The elderly are the fastest growing resource of the Church! Our life expectancy has grown by twenty-five years in the last one hundred years. It is expected to grow another twenty-five in the next one hundred years (One could say that we are having to deal with an issue of aging of biblical proportions).

The experience of aging is filled with struggle and loss, but also growth. In the face of our societal ageism, there are not many models either of aging with “grace” or of respect for elders. Many see old age as a problem to solve, as an illness to be cured, as an obstacle to be avoided, and even as a curse; yet one biblical interpretation of old age is as *blessing*. With so many years being added to life, the ministerial needs of our older members are changing. How do we help them to weather the struggles? How do we explore old age as a time filled with the Presence of God?

One of the goals of www.nefosa.org is to create a website where issues of spirituality and aging (across denominations and faith traditions) are

reflected upon and discussed. We are also looking for articles regarding struggles and successes in senior and intergenerational ministry. For further information contact Rev. Brian McCaffrey at bmccaffrey@lutherancare.org.

LCMS SPECIALIZED PASTORAL MINISTRY RECRUITMENT TASK FORCE

Under the sponsorship of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, following meetings in August 2008 and December 2008, the ten members of this task force recently met for the third time in St. Louis. There are two objectives of the task force: 1. To increase the number of LCMS CPE Supervisors; 2. To encourage more LCMS church workers to serve in specialized pastoral ministries – in institutions such as hospitals, prisons, and nursing homes – and as pastoral counselors in congregations and social ministry organizations.

Task force members are: Reverend John Costello, Reverend John Fale, Reverend Bruce Hartung, Reverend Joel Hempel, Deaconess Cherryll Hoffman, Reverend Lee Joesten, Ms. Judy Ladage, Reverend Herb Mueller, Reverend Richard Nuffer, and Reverend Jeff Scheer.

The next task force meeting is October 9 – 10 in St. Louis. For more information about the task force, call 800-248-1930, ext. 1388 or email Judy.Ladage@lcms.org.

Recent and upcoming events

LCMS

October 9-10, 2009 LCMS Specialized Pastoral Ministry Recruitment Task Force meets in St. Louis, Missouri

Inter-Lutheran

October 21-24, 2010 Zion XIV takes place at The Lodge at Simpsonwood in Atlanta, Georgia

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Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling welcomes your submissions of news germane to specialized ministries as well as announcements of forthcoming events. You may e-mail news items and announcements to one of the Caring Connections news editors: John Fale at John.Fale@lcms.org or Judith Simonson at jsimonson@pennswoods.net