Disaster
OPENING PRAYER

Lord, the waters are rising all around me everywhere.
I am afraid...
Lord, the waters cannot... will not quench the rising flames that are consuming everything in its path.
I am afraid...
Lord, the earth quakes and trembles devastating homes and taking lives.
Lord, we are without food, clean water, shelter... it feels as if the disaster has stripped my dignity and fortitude. Give me courage and determination.
Lord, the storms are clouding my hope and pouring rains into my will to move forward...
Oh, Lord. Where are you? I am afraid...
Oh, Lord. Where are you? Send me hope.

INDIVIDUAL WARM-UP

Take time to reflect on disaster in your community and around the world:
1. What is your experience, if any, with disaster? Is it first-hand, second, or through news?
2. How hard or easy is it for you to ask for help or to share when you’re not sure if you will even have enough?

GROUP WARM-UP

Together review the RESPECTful Guidelines and Mutual Invitation process and recommit to your small group covenant.

Discuss the following questions:
1. What are the great things your congregation and community are known for?
2. If a disaster were to affect your town tomorrow, what would be your response?
   a. The response of your church?
   b. The response of your community?
3. How would you desire to be treated by outsiders coming to your aid?
   a. How do you believe we are called to treat others when responding in the midst of disaster?
**GROUNDED IN SCRIPTURE**

In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we’re talking about is Christ’s body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn’t amount to much, would we? So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ’s body, let’s just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren’t.

If you preach, just preach God’s Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don’t take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don’t get bossy; if you’re put in charge, don’t manipulate; if you’re called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don’t let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

Love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don’t quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

— Romans 12:4-13

**DISCUSS AS A GROUP**

What stands out to you in this scripture? Why

What “part of the body” are you? What are your unique gifts and talents (please note- everyone has at least a few, so encourage each other if naming them is hard for one or more members of your small group)?

What does it mean to “practice playing second fiddle”? When have you done this well? When or with whom can you do this better or more intentionally?

**WHAT DOES THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAY?**

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (“UMCOR”) exists to assist United Methodists and churches to become involved globally in direct ministry to persons in need through programs of relief, rehabilitation, and service, including issues of displaced persons, hunger and poverty, disaster response, and disaster risk reduction; and to assist organizations, institutions, and programs related to annual conferences and other units of The United Methodist Church in their involvement in direct service to such persons in need.


**DISCUSS AS A GROUP**

What stands out to you from our United Methodist doctrine?
WHAT IS UMCOR?

UMCOR stands for United Methodist Committee on Relief

VISION

As the humanitarian relief and development arm of The United Methodist Church, UMCOR strengthens and transforms people and communities.

MISSION

Compelled by Christ to be a voice of conscience on behalf of the people called Methodist, UMCOR works globally to alleviate human suffering and advance hope and healing.

UMCOR’s work can be categorized into three major areas:
1. Humanitarian Relief / Disaster Response
2. Sustainable Development
3. Global Health (in collaboration with Global Ministries)

WHAT IS ERT?

Early Response Teams (ERTs) fill a specific need in the early days after a disaster to clean out flood-damaged homes, remove debris, place tarps on homes, and otherwise help to prevent further damage, while providing a caring Christian presence.

ERTs are not a first-response group of emergency workers, nor are they recovery, rebuild, or repair teams. Under very specific guidelines, ERTs assist survivors, without causing further harm or being a burden to the affected community. ERTs require an invitation to travel to another district, conference, or jurisdiction. UMCOR works in collaboration with United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM).

(From: https://www.umcor.org/UMCOR/About-Us)

PRAY TOGETHER...

God of Compassion- hear our pleas for support in our time of struggle.
God, inspire those with so much to remember and respond to those who are with so little after natural disaster.
God, we believe there is enough.
God, invite us to be compassionate toward others and to deeply desire to be in mutual relationship with those who are serving and those who are being served.
God, may our presence in response to natural disaster be of radical hospitality, intentional listening, and deep passion for making your love known.
God, teach us to listen more than we speak. Help us grow comfortably sitting with people who are struggling in a time of discomfort and distress. God, give us clear vision on how we can best respond to your beloved in the midst of natural disaster.
God, reveal to me my gifts and talents so that I have no excuse to not use them when called upon. Amen.
HOW DOES DISASTER AFFECT OUR COMMUNITIES?

This session’s videos will feature the stories and testimonies of Ms. Lynda Thacker and the Rev. Peter Matthews whose lives have been deeply and closely affected by gun violence.

IN THIS SESSION YOU WILL HEAR...

We did the best we could...
We had been forgotten. I couldn’t tell them the truth, that no one was coming to help.
The fear of the unknown was starting to get to people.
Not enough personnel. No funds left.
The most important skill you can bring to the [worksite] is listening. If people want to tell you their story- and they often do- you should leave the tools in the van, sit down, and listen.
We let her know she was in charge- we didn’t move things without asking her or go to lunch without letting her know we’d be back. We tried not to be so busy that we failed to connect with her.

When it comes to helping a neighbor, there is enough:
enough time... resources... enough love.
Whatever gifts you have just might be the very gifts that are needed in a situation.
The one tool you must not show up to a [worksite] without: a flexible attitude.
People displaced by disasters just want to go home.
Long after the government goes home, and the media has turned to more photogenic misfortunes, faith-based organizations like the United Methodist Church will still be there... You can be a part of it!
AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO, DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

1. How has natural disaster affected your life and what has been its impact on how you view faith, other people, and the world?

2. Some people believe that God causes natural disasters for certain people or places because of their sinfulness. Others view natural disasters as the result of changes to our earth and see the presence of God show up in the friendly faces of sisters and brothers in faith who choose to stop their lives and respond immediately. What do you believe about God’s presence and people’s goodness in the midst of natural disaster?

3. Do you believe, even in the midst of disaster, that there is enough? Enough resources, wisdom, hope, progress?
   a. Do you believe you are enough? Do you believe that your wisdom, experience, values, and passion will be enough to respond when God calls you?
| **PRAY** | Pray for and with those affected by natural disaster and those responding.  
Pray for God to reveal ways that you can be inspired to respond. |
| **SERVE** | Serve communities affected by natural disaster by putting together:  
Cleaning (Flood) Buckets  
Hygiene Kits  
https://www.umcor.org/umcor/relief-supplies/relief-supply-kits/hygiene |
| **PARTNER** | Partner with local & national organizations such as:  
UMCOR: https://www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Resources  
The General Board of Global Ministries: https://www.umcor.org/ |
| **LEARN** | Learn about disaster readiness training and the phases of a disaster:  
https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/disaster-response-0 |
| **LEAD** | Lead a disaster response team after becoming a certified ERT:  
https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/early-response-team  
Lead a Volunteers in Mission (VIM) team after immediate disaster care has been provided by becoming a VIM Team Leader or Spiritual Guide: https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/volunteers-mission-team-leader-trainings |
| **CONNECT** | Connect with your District Disaster Response Coordinator(s) to see about supporting disaster relief locations in West Ohio and beyond:  
https://www.westohioumc.org/conference/west-ohio-disaster-response-coordinators |