



REGION 1 HAMMER & DANCE

June 10, 2020

United for Ministry in the Days of COVID-19.

The Social Service Agencies
 and Synods of Region 1.

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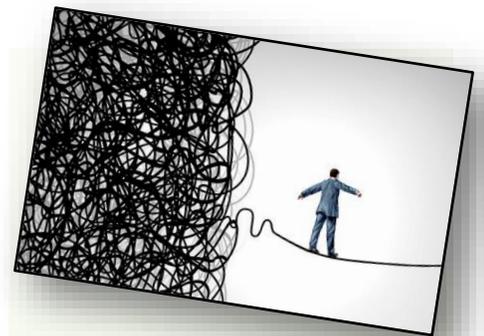
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The problem with Disaster Preparedness work is that disasters keep getting in the way. That's a version of "the interruptions are your job!" It's also a personal truth because I came on board to help Region 1 prepare for anticipated disaster challenges, but I got here too late. COVID-19 was full on when I started March 23.

Our six Region 1 Synods, LSS of Alaska and LCSNW have done amazing work adapting to the limitations and challenges imposed by the coronavirus. Now our communities are ravished in the aftermath of a most definitely unnatural disaster – racism. And, on the radar screens of some of you, eastern Oregon and Washington experienced significant flooding last February. Further flooding was experienced less than a month ago. For those whose homes are still unlivable this is far from 'old business.'

A complicating factor now is how these disasters all interweave and compound each other.

This week I wish to share thoughts on this interplay, what we're doing right, and why disaster preparedness is so vitally important. - Dave Brauer-Rieke



These things pull at us right now, today, as institutional leaders:

- **Concern** for our staff and front line workers;
- **Anger** at racism, the killing of George Floyd and all it represents;
- **Uncertainty** around the future of COVID-19 and its implications;
- **Confidence** in the love and providence of God;
- **The Need** to keep first things first, that is our mission and ministries;
- **Hope** which is everywhere and always present for our world.
- **Everything Environment.**

Umatilla Flooding Update

[\(Updates available on Region 1 Disaster Prep webpage.\)](#)



“You are advised to LEAVE IMMEDIATELY! Gather any belongings and make efforts to protect your home. If you stay, emergency services may not be available to assist you further.” read a statement from the Umatilla Sheriff's office February 7, 2020. This was in the wake of the worst flooding Umatilla Country has ever experienced. The Umatilla River breached its banks in 1965 and 1996/1997, but despite mitigation efforts the February 7 flooding has

been the worst. Some 450 families have damaged or destroyed homes. Impacts stretch from Pendleton as far north as Walla Walla, WA. The Federated Tribes of the Umatilla have been deeply impacted.

As one would hope neighbor began to help neighbor as the flooding hit. Some 50 people were helicoptered out of isolated areas. Those with tractors set out to clear the muck and move people's belongings. Sheriffs, emergency workers, medical personnel all jumped into immediate action.

Churches are often early to the game with food and spiritual support in such disasters. Our thanks to Pr. Travis Larsen of Peace Lutheran Church in Pendleton and Pr. Joel Ley of Christ Lutheran in Walla Walla for being a Lutheran presence. Charlene Larsen of First Lutheran in Astoria, OR is also deeply engaged through the Oregon VOAD, representing LCSNW and LDR. Thank you Charlene! Emergency services like the Red Cross and United Way are also actively engaged.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown declared a state of Emergency for three Oregon Counties February 7 and proposed a \$12 aid package for the area February 21. FEMA announced April 3 that federal funds would be made available, but it is taking time for these funds to find the need. May 20 a second wave of flooding visited a local community just outside Pendleton. Government funds are not available to these families, nor are Oregon funds available to Washington residents. The politics of disaster response can be disheartening.



Local congregations are a Godsent for many people in situations like these. Lutheran Disaster Response has been actively monitoring the situation through Charlene Larsen. The Oregon Synod Disaster Response team is also on task. Our strength is in long term care and recovery. Lutherans are on the scene and will be for months to come. ✖

Coronavirus Pandemic Update

Region 1 Synods, LCSNW and LSS of Alaska have all made heroic adjustments and changes over the last three months while "Stay at Home" orders have impacted the familiar patterns of our work and ministry. We, with the world around us, now move increasing from the 'hammer' to the 'dance' as we seek ways to unwind restrictions and return to some sense of normalcy. Thank you all for your amazing work!



The realities of the coronavirus are that it becomes increasingly difficult for those dealing with the Umatilla Flooding to find volunteers. Individuals are needed for case management and advocacy for those seeking financial aid. Volunteers are often people of early retirement age, currently a vulnerable population. This is one example of how one disaster cripples our ability to engage another. We also observe that church membership may be overly focused on internal issues such as "When can we return to worship?" and financial stability rather than being focused outward. These are very real issues, understandable in the wake of a disaster but, again, they complicate disaster response efforts.

Because State VOADs, government agencies, and various charity and social service agencies have capacity and experience, attention to flood victims in eastern Washington and Oregon has continued. Part of our job in Region 1 is to deepen and broaden the capacity of our congregations and institutions for times just like these. ✕

Racial Injustice Update



The murder of George Floyd, and ensuing social unrest, is not a 'natural' disaster in the way floods or pandemics might be understood. However, racism in our country is a social disaster and national disgrace of unimaginable proportions. We have had decades, if not centuries, to address social inequities around race and we continually fail to do so effectively. Injustice will, does, and must demand or attention.

While there is much to be discussed here around spiritual and justice concerns, through the lens of disaster preparedness we must acknowledge the following. **The vulnerability and marginalization of individuals – in this case African Americans – aggravates and worsens disaster scenarios of every kind.**

It was more impoverished individuals living in trailer courts in flood plains of Pendleton who were the more affected by the flooding there. It was the people of the Confederated Tribes living, in similar situations, who were also among the most affected. As with African Americans, a long history of injustice and marginalization often makes First Nation Peoples the first victims of natural disasters. And, it is now the case that seeking justice through demonstrations puts participants at risk, not only through physical violence and retaliation, but health wise due to a still active pathogen in the air. Seniors, Black or White, who might normally join in such actions also are showing up in smaller numbers due to health concerns.

Disaster layers upon disaster eroding our ability to respond as effectively to any and all. The only antidote to such a scenario is preparation. We respond now as we are able, but we must balance preparation with response for the needs of tomorrow. ✘

Environmental Disaster Update

Under the cover of the coronavirus pandemic, social unrest and distraction, the current U.S. administration has been continually dismantling environmental and climate change protections and progress. Our developing Region 1 Disaster Preparedness Virtual Library carries two new feeds. [One is dedicated to climate issues.](#) (Please see [Region1BePrepared.org](#))



President Trump recently signed an executive order that calls on agencies to waive required environmental reviews of infrastructure projects to be built during the pandemic-driven economic crisis. Compounding this problem, the Environmental Protection Agency has proposed a new rule that changes the way the agency uses cost-benefit analyses to enact Clean Air Act regulations, effectively limiting the strength of future air pollution controls. While President Trump sites the need to get the economy moving in the wake of the coronavirus as justification for this order, he has sought to weaken environmental protections since prior to the outbreak. Such as:

- Almost immediately upon taking office the President began dismantling climate legislation and protections put in place under the prior administration. This has made compliance with our Paris Accord agreements nearly impossible.

- Last November the president announce he would lead the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord.
- In March the Administration rolled back fuel efficiency standards.
- On several occasions the president has sought to reactive pipeline projects, like the Keystone XL project, found to be environmentally unsound.
- In May the president rolled back Oil Train protections put in place by the State of Washington.
- [To date 64 pieces of environmental protection legislation](#) have been nullified by the president, and another 34 are actively on the chopping block.

While some may agree with the president's stance on environmental policy from an economic viewpoint, what we know is that climate and environmental compromises aggravate the vulnerability of marginalize individuals the most. The president's recent weakening of clean air regulations, for example, will erode the health of African American citizens more than any other ethnic group due to the history of gentrification and redlining policies. Simply stated, African Americans and other minority groups live where pollution is the worst because people of means have left such neighborhoods.

Once again, we see that disaster layers upon disaster eroding our ability to respond. The only antidote to such a scenario is preparation. We respond now as we are able, but we must balance response with preparation for the needs of tomorrow. Who will be the leaders to speak truth in such matters? ❖



Playing Hookey

Preacher So-and-So

He ain' got no good news for me
 Even though I'm seein' bodies hit the street like
 fallin' leaves He said "All I know is Jesus
 Yeah that's all I know to preach"
 I guess Jesus doesn't care if I get killed by the police
 I guess Jesus doesn't care if I get killed by the police
 I guess Jesus doesn't care if I get killed by the police
 I guess Jesus doesn't care if I get killed by the police

(Chorus)

Come on - This could not be the truth
 This shit is not good news
 If it's gon' be that way
 I don't think I'll go to church this Sunday
 I'm...I'm just keepin' it real
 It's just the way I feel
 The shit is not okay
 I don't think I'll go to church this Sunday



How does disaster layer upon disaster? [Andre Henry offers brilliant insights and reflections on the interplay of COVID-19 and White Supremacy.](#) Twelve minutes, 55 seconds. Absolutely worth your time!