



Region 1 Disaster Preparedness and Response
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
GOD'S WORK. OUR HANDS.

ELCA REGION 1 HAMMER & DANCE

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United for Ministry in the Days of COVID-19
Lutheran Social Service Agencies, Synods
and ELCA Church Members Together

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Welcome to 2021!

More than any other year in my personal history I bring a diversity of thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears into 2021.

[Vaccines are now being distributed](#) to combat the coronavirus pandemic. Yet, infection and death rates are at an all-time high. Fresh political leadership takes the reins at all levels of government this month. Yet, the social cost of transition has been unbelievably high. Flagship Lutheran ministries such as immigrant and refugee resettlement now seem politically possible again, but much more complex as climate change becomes yet one more factor forcing people to flee their homes. Need and opportunity rise as one.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge God, and the Divine will make straight your paths.” we read in Proverbs 3. Never before have I so needed to hear such words. Never before I have been so aware of my personal frailty, the complex interrelatedness of all life, and the tentative nature of our social contracts.

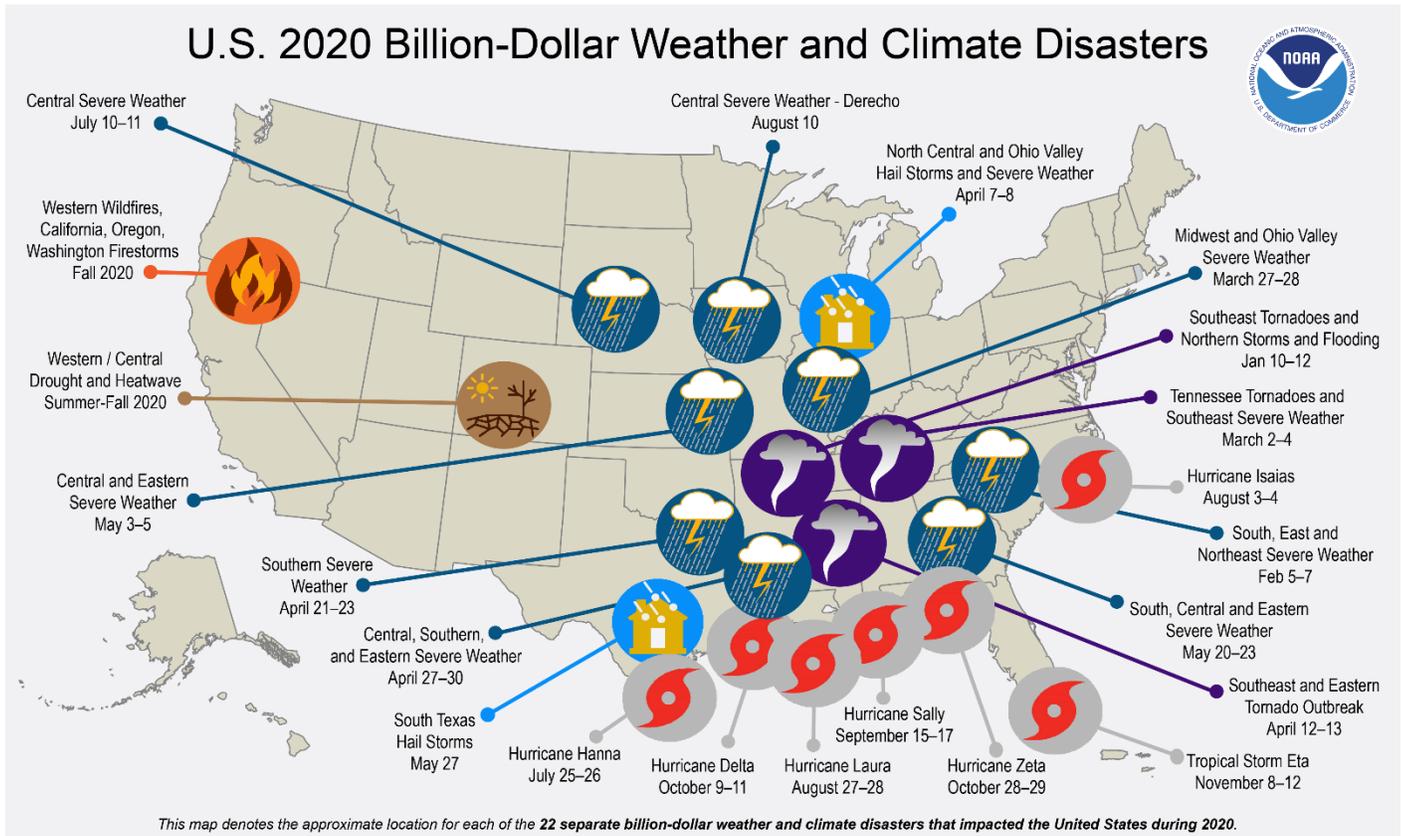
The year ahead is full of Grace, revelation, and power. My New Year's resolution is to open my heart to it. *Dave Brauer-Rieke*



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Let's Talk Climate Change Induced Disaster



Oregon and Washington experienced major flooding this past year from the Umatilla River, and shared a devastating wildfire season with other western states. [Billion dollar weather and climate related disasters are increasing in both frequency and severity according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.](#) (NOAA) NOAA has been tracking such events since 1980.

Disasters such as tornados and hurricanes are not climate caused, but they are climate change fueled. Category 5 hurricanes, for example, are increasingly common. They are wetter, slower moving and much more destructive than hurricanes of even a decade ago. Floods, such as the February 2020 flood in Umatilla, are more frequent and disperse more water than similar events in the past. This is due at least in part to weather anomalies associated with climatic changes. *(continue next page)*

[Since 1980 ALASKA has been impacted by 7 billion dollar disasters.](#) The most recent was the wildfire season of 2019 that destroyed more than 2.5 million acres of forest. These wildfire conditions were primed due to Alaska's record-breaking heat and dry conditions during the summer of 2019.

[Since 1980 WASHINGTON has been impacted by 12 Wildfire, 9 Drought, 1 Severe Storm, 3 Flooding, and 1 Freeze billion-dollar disasters.](#) Wildfires in 2020 spread rapidly and destroyed several small towns in CA, Oregon and Washington.

West Coast and Alaskan wildfires are a matter of forest management, increased population growth (human intrusion into wilderness areas) and climate change simultaneously. It is undeniable, however, that climate is drying out regions in a way that makes survival of forests increasing less tenable.

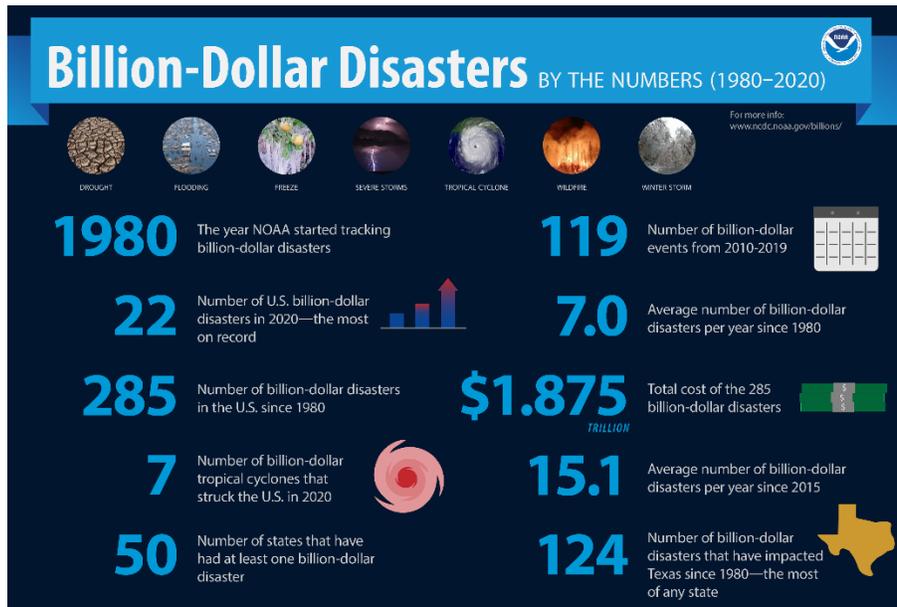


Since 1980 **OREGON** has been impacted by **13 Wildfire, 13 Drought, 2 Severe Storm, 3 Flooding, and 1 Freeze billion-dollar disasters.** Oregon had historic levels of wildfire damage, as over 2,000 structures burned this past year.

Since 1980 **IDAHO** has been impacted by **12 Wildfire, 10 Drought, 3 Flooding, and 1 Freeze billion-dollar disasters.** Drought condition through the northwest in 2015 caused otherwise productive fields to lie fallow and unproductive. This hurt the people of Idaho and surrounding states.



Since 1980 **MONTANA** has been impacted by **11 Wildfire, 10 Drought, 2 Severe Storm, 4 Flooding, and 1 Freeze billion-dollar disasters.** Extreme drought caused extensive impacts to agriculture in 2017. Field crops were severely damaged and there was a severe lack of feed for cattle.



Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) decided in late 2019 that these realities must not be ignored. What used to be a ministry of disaster response – with a heavy emphasis on housing for displaced survivors of disaster – is now also actively asking what it means to take a clear pattern of accelerating and predictable climate induced disasters into account. Honest assessment and preparation are key.

In the same way that the COVID pandemic has challenged our patterns of worship and outreach; in the same way that racism can no longer be ignored in this country; in the same way our American political landscape has just been changed forever; so climate change is already demanding of Christ's Church contextual ministries which proclaim the revealing of the children of God.

A ministry of climate change education/action, and disaster preparedness is a must for the years ahead.

The Light Shines in the Darkness

2nd Sunday After Epiphany, January 17, 2021 – [John 1:43-51](#) – Invite Again



“Can anything good come out of Nazareth? ... Come and see!”

Jesus was from a small, no nothing town. More than that, he was from a region associate with political sedition and discontent. Why waste time there? Well, when we already know the answer, we don't pursue the question, do we? As we embrace a new president, COVID vaccinations, and a year of fresh opportunities do we already know the answers, or might we check out the possibilities?

3rd Sunday After Epiphany, January 24, 2021 – [Mark 1:14-20](#) – Begin Anew

“Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. . .” It is a disaster, an injustice, an abuse that unleashes the ministry of Jesus. His ministry is not one that looks back, but forward. What's on tap for your 2021?

4th Sunday After Epiphany, January 31, 2021 – [Mark 1:21-28](#) – Restore Faith

“What is this? A new teaching – with authority!” Here we see the teaching and ministry of Jesus compared to that of the scribes, those who ‘say long prayers and love to have the seats of honor at banquets.’ Our country longs for leaders who will walk their talk and lead with integrity. Why can't that be us?



Why should we listen to you?!! is the title of Dave Brauer-Rieke's 5th Sunday sermon January 31. Join “Elder, Elder” on LDR Underground Christian Talk Radio* for the straight scoop on walking your talk and rocking your walk! [Sermon download available Friday, January 15, 2021 for use Sunday January 31. Based on Mark 1:12-18.](#)

5th Sunday After Epiphany, February 7, 2021 – [Mark 1:29-39](#) – Enact Hope

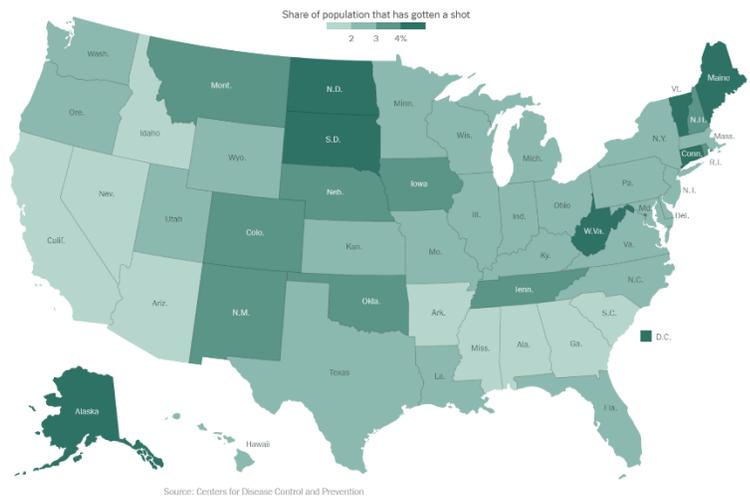
Jesus takes a woman's hand and lifts her out of fever to fulfillment. It is an intimate, personally act. He speaks, confronts, retreats, prays and returns - he also has a broader mission which he will not forget. We are also called to such things. *“Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.”*



* LDR “Underground Christian Talk Radio” doesn't actually exist – yet!

Vaccination Rollouts and Implications

Nationally coronavirus vaccinations have proceeded much slower than originally hoped. Here in the territory of ELCA Region 1 our experience is no different. [As of Monday, January 11, 2021 the New York Times reports that:](#)



- **Alaska** has vaccinated 35,027 people or 4.8% of its population.
- **Montana** has vaccinated 41,703 people or 3.9% of its population.
- **Washington** has vaccinated 188,215 people or 2.5% of its population.
- **Oregon** has vaccinated 97,024 people or 2.3% of its population.
- **Idaho** has vaccinated 34,713 people or 1.9% of its population.

Distribution hurdles and priorities differ state to state and, of course, the Biden administration will be working to assist states in rapid deployment. However, it seems obvious at this point that “life as normal” will not return for some time.

What can we do as churches and church related institutions?



1. Continue to follow CDC and state health authority recommendations.
2. Encourage members or employees to maintain infection prevention protocols such as hand washing, mask wearing and social distancing.
3. Witness to the importance of vaccinations by receiving them yourself when available, encouraging public education, and giving employees or staff time off if needed to receive their vaccinations.
4. If your community is looking for public locations to offer vaccinations consider making your church, public spaces or parking lots available for use.
5. If your state is looking for people trained or willing to be trained to give vaccinations make sure your people are aware of this opportunity.
6. Continue vital ministry in the ways you have developed over the past 10 months.
7. Begin to imagine what it might mean to re-engage ministry in a post-vaccinated world, but understand that this is still some time off.
8. Pray, witness, stay connected, have faith, practice hospitality in the ways you can.