

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY CRISIS RESPONSE TRAINING



Hosted by:

CiRCLe M

Centre for Rural Community Leadership & Ministry

2014

Financially supported by

The Calgary Foundation and the Lutheran Triune Educational and Benevolent Society of Calgary

Ready or Not!

Disastrous happenings never announce themselves. And although we always hope they will never occur in our communities, the possibilities of such events are numerous:

- natural disasters (e.g. fire, flood, drought)
- economic crises (e.g. BSE, industry shut-down, bankruptcy)
- human instigated violence (e.g. shootings, explosions, workplace retaliation, multiple accident victims, domestic terrorism)... and many other such happenings.

Emergency measures organizations (EMOs) and rural churches are typically not well connected to one another. EMOs often don't know about the many things that churches can 'bring to the table' as far as supporting a crisis response and recovery. Furthermore, because churches may not be well connected in a community, they often don't think of themselves as a significant 'collective' asset for times of emergency planning and response.



In May 2014, CiRCLe M hosted an online emergency response training seminar. Nine rural communities from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba participated. The goal was and is, to enhance emergency plans

in town and country communities, and to expand the range of crises considered with a special focus on how churches can contribute.

This seminar was an opportunity to bridge the gaps in community connections so that local EMOs, churches and other non-profit groups could come together to begin discussions about emergency preparedness. It was an exercise in 'awareness' training - not, in emergency training. In other words, it was about raising awareness, making connections, passing on learning, assessing local crisis-based vulnerabilities and working to mitigate some of those.



The seminar was a collection of presentations, videos and discussions in emergency management, health care, church ministry and community development. Experts in various fields looked at

- key phases in emergency planning and response
- what can happen in a disaster (using a mix of Canadian examples)
- mental health issues related to trauma and how to respond
- caring for communities in economic crisis
- factors that enable community resiliency and restoration, and
- an Alberta town's recent success in bringing local churches together with their local emergency measure organization to enhance emergency planning.



It is our hope that the communities will strengthen their emergency plans... and the gifts of the church will be part of those plans... being put to good use during times of great need. The presentations from the seminar were recorded so that digital materials could be produced for follow-up use.

Presentation Highlights

Pincher Creek Alberta - Presentation 1 Church and Community Working Together

Presenter

Rev. Joyce Sasse

Retired United Church Minister,
Pincher Creek AB

Presentation Highlights

In 2012, Rev. Joyce attended the first set of seminars that CiRCLe M offered on *church and community crisis response training*. She took her notes to the Pincher Creek church ministerial and they wanted to know how they could help during times of local emergency in their community. Soon after, discussions began between the local EMO representative and the ministerial.

This presentation is part 1 of the Pincher Creek story, telling how the church ministerial and EMO came together. It highlights the value of a multi-disciplinary approach to emergency management and the need for emergency responders who can effectively deal with the 'softer' issues in times of trauma.



Part 2 of the story (later in the seminar) tells about the progress that Pincher Creek has made in involving the churches and other non-profits in local emergency preparedness planning.

Pincher Creek Alberta - Presentation 2

Church and Community Roles in Crisis Intervention

Recruiting Volunteers - The Pincher Creek Approach

Presenter

Rev. Joyce Sasse

Retired United Church Minister, Pincher Creek, Alberta

Presentation Highlights

This presentation tells about the progress that Pincher Creek has made in involving local churches and other non-profits in local emergency preparedness planning.

Pincher Creek's Background

Between 1995 and 2005 Pincher Creek faced a 'decade of disaster' which included forest and prairies fires, drought, a flood of the century, murders, suicides, and B.S.E. (which devastated the livestock industry).

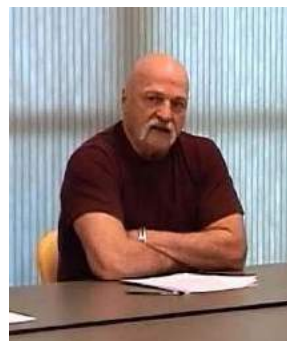
The region had a well-organized, well equipped EMO. The EMO Director recognized the importance of using volunteer resources to help with the people involved in these crises. Over time the EMO Director tried to find a process for recruiting volunteers and preparing them for disasters they hoped wouldn't happen.



Building a Comprehensive Community Response

(With help from the Ministerial Association and Community Service Organizations)

- Rev. Joyce tells the story of the way that The Ministerial Association and community organizations responded (informally) in the past, and the way their membership with the EMO is now considered to be an “essential service” in times of emergency. A representative of the Pincher Creek Ministerial now sits on the EMO Board as the *Director of Social Services* and is responsible for recruiting and training volunteers to do such things as staff a reception centre, know food preparation guidelines and procedures, and care for the disabled.
- Within the Ministerial, the membership still needs to acquaint itself with what chaplaincy services might be required.
- Everyone involved recognizes this is an on-going process which has just begun, but the community believes that multiple organizations are committed to community care, and that each has organizational structure, facilities, membership and resources to offer, which allows for the flexibility needed for this kind of availability.
- In the past the Ministerial found that, while working on an ad hoc basis, the need to respond as they did gave them great incentive to work together (both through the crises and well into the future).



Words of Hope

“Through being together working together, praying together and supporting each other, Pincher Creek is better able to face tough times.”

Components of Emergency Management

Presenter

Major Mike Hoeft

The Salvation Army, Saskatchewan Area Commander
Saskatchewan Emergency and Disaster Services Coordinator
Rural Ministry Consultant for The Salvation Army in Canada

Presentation Highlights

Major Mike has extensive experience in emergency management as an Officer of the Salvation Army in Saskatchewan. In this presentation he explains how churches can help in many ways before, during, and after an emergency. He highlights that it is important for churches to be involved in all aspects of the community well in advance of a disaster, asking the question "if something should happen, how would we help?"

- There are four pillars of 'response to disaster'. Churches can participate in all of them:
 - **mitigation** (take steps to reduce or eliminate long-term impacts and risks associated with potential natural or made-made disasters)
 - **preparedness** (prepare churches for a potential disaster)
 - **response** (activate church response to disaster)
 - **recovery** (repair and restore communities after disaster - back to the 'new normal')
- The Salvation Army is available to be part of any community response plan. And they have mobile canteens that can go out to any disaster site to help with feeding and care.
- The Salvation Army offers training in areas such as:
 - emotional and spiritual care
 - critical incidence stress management
 - food services and safety, and
 - a course entitled "Preparing Your Congregation for Disaster"
- In Saskatchewan, EMO training/information is available through municipalities. In Alberta and Manitoba, EMO training is offered through provincial government departments
- The Red Cross also offers training programs



The Flood in High River Alberta 2013

Presenter

Reverend Chris Hewko

Christian Missionary Alliance in Canada
Pastor, High River Alliance Church, High River, AB

Presentation Highlights

Pastor Chris and his family lived through the devastating High River flood in the spring of 2013. In this presentation, he tells the story of his experience and lessons learned:

- You can never be fully prepared for a disaster but thinking things through ahead of time is extremely helpful for coping with a tragedy
- Things to be prepared for in a disaster:
 - to work hard and often alone
 - to be disappointed in others



- frustration
 - loss of dignity
 - to receive a mix of sympathy and blame
 - for people to tell you 'your stuff is just *stuff*'
 - for an emotional roller coaster that you can't control
 - to juggle multiple roles
 - to not know how others can help you
 - for compassion fatigue (deeper impact than burnout)
 - that your people are spread out everywhere and you can't find many of them.
 - that people you normally count on, can't be counted on, while others that you didn't expect do step up to the plate.
- Things they wished they had had:
 - complete *cell*-phone list for entire congregation
 - a pre-planned alternate meeting area
 - storage of personal valuables on the main floor of house (not in basement)
 - knowledge of denominational processes during disaster so that they could 'lean into them' (e.g. financial relief)
 - Other things learned:
 - lower your expectations for everything but don't lower your 'asking' from others
 - don't expect as much from your staff or team
 - resist the urge to take control but instead allow others to engage. This promotes positive relationships
 - a positive gathering of community shortly after the crisis event is life-giving
 - reprieve given to exhausted clergy by the church head-office is also life-giving
 - getting over the event takes a very long time because it's a process that transforms lives. It's not something to rush through; rather let it take its course.



Caring for Communities in Economic Crisis

Presenter

Rev. Dr. Cameron Harder

Executive Director, Centre for Rural Community Leadership and Ministry (CiRCLe M)
 Professor of Systematic Theology, Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon SK

Presentation Highlights

Dr. Harder has extensive experience in pastoral ministry and theological education. His research has taken him to rural areas around the world, looking at the church's role in addressing the "shame" dynamic in farm bankruptcy. In his introductory remarks, he explains that almost every community goes through a crisis at some time and many do so regularly. No matter the origin of the crisis, health factors, social factors, economic factors, psychological factors and spiritual factors all come in to play, and so caring for communities requires a holistic approach. Often social and spiritual elements of care are neglected in emergency response.

In this presentation Dr. Harder looks at crises that have economic origins. The focus in this presentation emerges from a study about what happens when a family / business faces bankruptcy and how the church can offer support to the family and the community.

In Rural Communities Economic Crises Are All Too Familiar

- Examples of economic crises include BSE (which affects everyone in the cattle industry), work-force reduction / shut-down in a one-industry town, crippling of a major segment of the business community (flood, explosion)
- Boom times can be very stressful – e.g. Fort McMurray infrastructure is overwhelmed
- Bust times when core institutions that took decades to build are suddenly lost - e.g. schools, churches, businesses



Understanding Rural People/ Rural Situation

- The spirit of rural Canadians is often damaged by exhaustion, depression, shame, loss of hope (resilience is low and the healing of spirits is needed)
- Obstacles to getting help by individuals includes personal pride, depression, guilt, shame, loss of public respect, and fear that others might take advantage of one's economic vulnerability
- Men are particularly likely to avoid getting help. They tend to feel isolated and alone in their financial struggles, ashamed that they aren't able to look after their families.
- It's important to understand that we construct our local (and international) economies with some built-in values that tend to benefit some people and shame or disadvantage others. People are often respected according to their ability to meet these economic expectations of their community

Need for Spiritual Recovery

- Recovery of individuals and communities requires a change in people's core values
- Recovery comes in part from learning to disconnect one's own self-worth, and the community's too, from one's financial performance and to be able to face the future with hope

Role of the Church and Other Community Support Groups

- Try to understand and support those immediately affected by the crisis as they face grief, hopelessness, depression, anger, shame, silence and isolation. Gracious, non-judgmental listening is key.
- Pastors often have access to people in their homes (privacy, confidentiality) and can become aware of the spouses' and children's needs
- Help individuals process grief and recover self-esteem and hope for the future
- Help community members learn how to reach out in caring and supportive ways. Find opportunities to name and celebrate the blessings (whether they are property, social relationships, access to other resources). Brainstorm creative ways to connect these "assets" to solve difficult problems
- Appropriate rituals can enhance healing by providing a safe place to recall the suffering in controllable ways, affirm important values, connect persons with supportive community and a caring God. Remember that God does not abandon those facing difficult times.

Trauma Part 1: Psychological Effects of Trauma

Presenter

Dr. Cathy Carter-Snell

Associate Professor, School of Nursing & Midwifery, Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta

Presentation Highlights

Dr. Carter-Snell's academic research examines trauma and ways to recover from post-traumatic stresses.

This is part 1 of two presentations where Dr. Carter-Snell discusses trauma arising from crisis situations. In part 1 she helps her listeners gain understanding about how trauma affects people and what to watch for.

In part 2 she gives insight into how care-givers can promote resilience and apply 'psychological first aid'.

Understanding Trauma

- Trauma occurs when an event or series of events overwhelms someone's resources over a period of time
- Normal responses to crises situations and acute stress responses can be expected, but when the acute response lasts more than 24 hours significant problems may appear (PTSD, anxiety, depression)
- There may be evidence of physical and behavioural changes
- Men, women and children respond to trauma in different ways
- Subsequent stressors may make the situation more acute
- For individuals already feeling guilt or shame or avoiding coping, secondary victimization by insensitive persons is possible. (e.g. repeated forced de-briefings, comments like "aren't you lucky to survive" ...)
- When trying to offer support, instead of treating symptoms (e.g. alcohol abuse), care-givers need to look for underlying trauma
- Showing physical or emotional support and helping persons experience "unconditional grace" can be a healing step. Attendants must give undivided attention, acknowledge the person's strengths and allow silences



Trauma Part 2: Supporting People after Trauma and Disasters

Presenter

Dr. Cathy Carter-Snell

Mount Royal University, PhD SANE-A,
Associate Professor, School of Nursing & Midwifery, Mount Royal University, Calgary, Alberta

Presentation Highlights

Dr. Carter-Snell's academic research examines trauma and ways to mitigate its impacts.

In this presentation Dr. Carter-Snell gives insight into how caregivers can promote resilience and apply "psychological first aid" when dealing with those in rural communities who have faced crisis situations.

Promote Resilience and Apply Psychological First Aid

- Non-professional and field workers can promote resilience and help individuals develop their ability to withstand crisis
- Key principle of "psychological first aid" is to "do no harm"!
- Restore sense of safety, calm, help find connectors, encourage self-sufficiency and look for messages of hope
- Respect feelings of safety, dignity and rights (confidentiality & privacy), adapt assistance to local culture
- Don't get in the way of other emergency responders
- Promote positive coping. Avoid negative coping (such as drugs, alcohol, overwork, isolation, oversleeping)
- Avoid judging, imposing your own beliefs or rejecting an individual's spiritual interpretation of the crisis



Response to Man-Made Disaster

Yellowknife Giant Mine Explosion/Mass Murder

Presenters

Majors Alan and Karen Hoeft

The Salvation Army

Members, Territorial Crisis Response Team for The Salvation Army Canada & Bermuda Territory
Certified Trainers in The Salvation Army's Emergency and Disaster Response Curriculum

Presentation Highlights

Majors Al and Karen Hoeft were living in Yellowknife when the Giant Mine disaster happened. They played an integral role in responding to the trauma and aftermath of the crisis. In this presentation they tell about their experience and lessons learned:

In 1992 there was a strike/lockout at the Giant Mine in Yellowknife (NWT). A bomb was detonated underground that killed 9 men. Majors Al and Karen tell the story from the perspective of their work in the church.

- All “people groups” were affected (e.g. victims’ spouses, children; suspect’s family; emergency team responders; friends of victims / suspects; school counselors; health workers; child-care workers ...)
- The crisis and its effects dragged out over many years. Thirteen months passed before the preliminary trial for homicide was held. Ten years later there was a civil trial before widows could receive compensation. In June 2014 a parole hearing was held for the accused
- Over a prolonged period of time the community lived in fear and anger and the “blame game” was heard everywhere. Politicians and community leaders could not function in their usual capacity because of the complexity of issues. The “Yellowknife Community Support Group” was formed and took leadership in addressing the media and in finding ways to support people on “all sides” in the chaos
- The local Ministerial Association assumed a major leadership role within that Community Support Group, particularly during the early stages
- The constant media presence meant that for two years, and with each subsequent legal happening, “the whole world saw our neighbours acting out their anger”. “For the Yellowknifers there was no easy cure for the poison of the strike and the mass murder. All its victims could do was fume and curse, vent and weep. Marriages broke up. People left town. Some had breakdowns. A few people closest to the strike attempted suicide.” (The Third Suspect by David staples and Greg Owens)
- A community memorial service was organized (the service was largest event ever held in Yellowknife):
 - Organizers were mindful of the grief of individual families and of the community
 - The focus was on moving from PAIN to HOPE – they affirmed God is here in the midst of this difficult time
 - Helpful input for planning came from other communities who had experienced huge disasters
 - They tried to create an atmosphere of ‘ceremony’ (RCMP in red-serge) rather than ‘security’, Community Support Group members formed a “buffer” to give support and security to families to help them feel secure in a public setting

“Role of the Church” and “Lessons Learned by Ministerial”

- The churches’ membership consisted of people from “all sides”, so careful consideration was given as to how to be the church within this context



- They had to take care to choose a path that “didn’t take sides”, and tried to live a “ministry of presence”. They understood that they were involved in this situation “for the long haul”. They tried to help members model peace, hope, trust, restoration as they participated in life of the community
- They recognized that they were invited into people’s lives at a very deep and personal level very quickly
- Ministerial personnel had to learn to deal with “compassion fatigue”, and clergy had to let congregational members know about ways that congregants could help clergy and their families. The strength of the ministerial was their recognition that they needed each other ... when one had a bad day, others carried on
- The positive behaviour model they tried to follow has become a valued legacy which church folks remember as they reflect on this difficult time

Community Resiliency: Learning from Rural Communities

Presenter

Dr. Judith Kulig

Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge, Alberta

Presentation Highlights

Dr. Kulig's research looks at rural health issues and how community resilience can be achieved. This presentation grew out of Judith's follow-up studies done in various rural locations after crises had occurred (some natural, some economic). Two perspectives underlie her presentation:

- 1) We are no longer talking about the “storm of the decade”, but about the “storm of the year.” The frequency of severe weather events seems to be ever increasing
- 2) Rural does matter – stronger rural communities mean a stronger Canadian society as a whole.



Community Resiliency

- Community resiliency is defined as “the ability of a community to deal with adversity and move forward, and in so doing reach a higher level of functioning.”
- It is about a process that recognizes change, acknowledges strengths, makes improvements, and helps community members see how they can make a difference
- A crisis-event becomes a part of the story of the community; it is important to acknowledge what happened and integrate it into the community’s public history.

Lessons Learned About Community Resiliency

- Communications are essential – with all individuals/groups within the community (e.g. major concern when electricity is lost)
- Leadership is both from the top and from within. Local knowledge should be used. Don’t depend too heavily on outside groups which may be well-meaning but not well-informed (and often have short-term commitments)
- A well-designed relief program is essential (evacuation and recovery)
- Community resources can be allocated beforehand: equipment and other resources can be tallied, kept updated, and stored in safe, easy-to-access places for use in emergencies
- Essential to keep emergency plans updated. Otherwise the plans themselves can create confusion
- The time to build community connections is *before*, not during, a crisis. Resiliency is built when things are going well, not when they collapse
- Expect a grieving period

A Suggested Recovery Model

This model includes a

- pre-disaster phase,
- the impact and heroic response phase,
- the disillusionment phase, and
- community recovery initiatives

CiRCLe M is grateful to the two granting agencies who share our vision for engaging local people in local emergency response. Their generous financial support helped make this year's project possible.

We extend our sincere thanks to

The Calgary Foundation

and the

Lutheran Triune Educational and Benevolent Society of Calgary.



Centre for Rural Community Leadership & Ministry (CiRCLe M)

114 Seminary Crescent, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 0X3
306-966-7864; www.circle-m.ca; circle.m.ministries@gmail.com