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PROTOCOL for UMCOR/UMVIM COLLABORATION IN U.S. DISASTER RESPONSE

Background

Over the past 7-10 years, UMCOR and UMVIM have been working cooperatively in disaster response and recovery within the United States. UMCOR has been given the responsibility of oversight for the United Methodist Church's disaster response by the General Conference (Par. 1326.2.a.1 2004 BOD). That oversight includes training of annual conference staff and disaster response coordinators, solicitation and management of emergency funds through the Advance, and assisting an annual conference in a disaster zone with the design of their response. The Mission Volunteers Program Area of the General Board of Global Ministries is given the responsibility of enabling the participation of persons in volunteer programs and projects so that affirming, empowering, and trusting relationships are established (Par. 1312.5).

UMCOR's work with an annual conference following a disaster is to establish a mechanism for immediate and long-term response. One piece in the response mechanism is the management of volunteers. This piece has grown increasingly important to the recovery process but also increasingly unwieldy.

Experience shows that volunteers are always eager to go to the disaster site. Early Response Teams (ERT) serve a vital role, but theirs is not the only role for volunteers. Very early in the disaster we need to put a system in place that will not only find appropriate work for volunteers who are not ERTs, but also appropriate housing for them. Housing in the intermediate relief stage is important, as is housing for the long-term recovery.

Most often a conference has depended upon its UMVIM coordinator to take on the responsibility of managing these incoming volunteers - even when the UMVIM coordinator has had little or no training or experience in hosting volunteers. When the coordinator is unable to take on the responsibility of managing the incoming volunteers, the disaster response committee will work with UMCOR to appoint a new person or persons to create the volunteer management system. In the meantime, the volunteers are calling, arriving in the zone and asking for assistance and direction.

The staffs of UMCOR and Mission Volunteers now desire to clarify the roles played by UMCOR and UMVIM in the early days of a disaster. The consistent use of ERTs formed by UMVIM, as well as the addition of an UMVIM presence with UMCOR in the early assessment and guidance process, will bring an improved United Methodist presence to the disaster response. Therefore, UMCOR proposes to work with the Jurisdictional UMVIM coordinators to create a team from each jurisdiction that can work with annual conferences to set up the volunteer management system following

disasters. This Jurisdictional Disaster Volunteer Management Team (JDVMT) will be included in the consulting team UMCOR creates after being invited to assist by the area bishop. Further, UMCOR will, in consultation with the Jurisdictional UMVIM Coordinator, offset the expenses of at least one member of the JDVMT.

Whereas

UMCOR is responsible for the United Methodist Church's disaster response through the annual conferences; and

- UMVIM is responsible for enabling the participation of persons in volunteer programs and projects so that affirming, empowering and trusting relationships are established; and
- UMVIM's unique role in disaster response is acknowledged to be in the training and deployment of Early Response Teams and in developing Jurisdictional Disaster Volunteer Management Teams to work with UMCOR in initial disaster response in the development of the volunteer management system; and
- UMCOR's unique role in disaster response is to manage the "big picture" of the annual conference's program of response in coordination with the General Church's contribution of resources;

The following is presented as a protocol for the collaborative UMCOR/UMVIM response in US disasters:

Jurisdictional Disaster Volunteer Management Team (JDVMT)

Understanding not every disaster will require the deployment of the JDVMT, the decision to request their participation will be made by UMCOR in consultation with the bishop of the disaster area. Responsibilities of the Jurisdictional Disaster Volunteer Management Team (JDVMT) will be as follows:

- 1) Work with the annual conference affected by a disaster to create a structure for the management of all volunteers coming into the disaster zone.
- 2) Assist the Annual Conference Disaster Team in setting up a call center so that offers of volunteers can be appropriately managed.
- 3) In cooperation with the Annual Conference Disaster Team, find and assign appropriate work for all volunteers - both teams and individuals - until such time as the annual conference is able to manage this work on its own.
- 4) Propose to the Annual Conference Disaster Team volunteer housing options that can be used during relief and early recovery phases of the disaster.
- 5) Make recommendations to the Annual Conference Disaster Committee on volunteer housing solutions for long-term recovery.

Early Response Teams

Early Response Teams (ERTs) are trained volunteers who are able to arrive self-contained and self-sufficient on a disaster scene to provide assistance with making homes “safe, sanitary, and secure”. The ERTs “belong” to their annual conference and enter into another conference’s disaster zone at the invitation of the Bishop through UMCOR. The primary responsibility for training ERTs will be with Jurisdictional UMVIM Offices using UMCOR-approved materials. Responsibility for maintaining a list of trained teams in each annual conference will be with the Jurisdictional UMVIM offices. Specifics related to the deployment of ERTs are:

- UMCOR will request ERTs through the Jurisdiction UMVIM office, who will then contact and deploy ERTs to a disaster.
- ERTs will report on their location and work to their Jurisdictional Coordinator.
- ERTs will report to and serve under the authority of the annual conference in which they are responding, generally through that conference's Disaster Coordinator.
- ERTs serving within the bounds of their own annual conference will work under direction of their own Annual Conference Disaster Coordinator or Incident Coordinator.

This integrated approach between UMCOR and UMVIM, with UMCOR providing oversight of the disaster response and UMVIM providing leadership in the management of volunteers and deployment of ERTs, will provide a more efficient response and use of volunteers following disasters. UMVIM involvement in the disaster response ranges from the very beginning to the long term, and, with the establishment of appropriate systems, those who suffer the devastation of disaster will be better served.

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