

## **PRESBYTERY OF SAN DIEGO DISASTER ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE**

### **Who are we?**

On November 20, 2008, a motion was made at the Presbytery meeting to establish a SD Presbytery Fire Relief Committee. But this ministry really began before that motion. While the fires were still burning, (10/23-26) two members of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) National Response Team (NRT) flew into San Diego to meet with the Presbytery. ([www.PCUSA.org/pda/response.htm](http://www.PCUSA.org/pda/response.htm)) A Presbytery staff member became the contact person for our congregations to disseminate information on what to do and how congregations could assist. Each congregation was requested to designate a *Congregational Response Coordinator* as a contact person for this and further information. A meeting of the Congregational Response Coordinators occurred 11/30 with members of the second PDA National Response Team. A group was formed to move us forward for this and potentially other disasters. That group is the SD Presbytery Disaster Assistance Committee (PDAC). Our group has active members from Rancho Bernardo Community Presbyterian Church (RBCPC), Solano Beach Presbyterian Church (SBPC), First Presbyterian Church San Diego and Christ Presbyterian Church, Carlsbad and is meeting monthly. (Fourth Tuesday, 1030-1200 at RBCPB.)

### **What are we about?**

We all know from the 2003 fires that the response and recovery process for this disaster will be a long term investment of time and effort. Many organizations respond initially and one of the major issues is coordination of the activities. The national model for this coordination is an organization called *Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster* (VOAD.) ([www.SDiVOAD.org](http://www.SDiVOAD.org)) This brings together the many, many agencies involved and establishes a structure for them to work together. San Diego Presbytery has joined the San Diego VOAD group and our committee is working with this group. Another organization in our community that has played an integral part is the San Diego Foundation. ([www.SDFoundation.org](http://www.SDFoundation.org) - scroll down to the "After the Fire Funds" section.) This foundation completed a community needs assessment (published 12/17/07) and has subsequently funded 7 "Community Recovery Teams". This places an office with staff in each of the fire damaged areas with coordinators and case managers to assist individual fire survivors. This structure provides a central location for the fire survivors to come to for assistance as well as for other groups to use to coordinate assistance needed. Activities of our committee are and will be coordinated through the Community Recovery Teams.

### **What are our churches doing?**

Many of our churches responded in the initial "respond" phase of this disaster.

Some examples include the following.

Fallbrook Presbyterian and Village Church – sheltered first responders in their buildings during their community evacuations. Westminster Presbyterian (Escondido) provided shelter for some of their congregation. Rancho Bernardo (RBCPC) became a focal point for all community members for provision of support, tools and initial labor. They also established an education series for the fire survivors to assist them in meeting the next challenges. (<http://rbcp.org> click on mission, then firestorm) Solano Beach (SBPC) had an existing Fire Relief Committee from the Cedar Fires of 2003. In 2007 their group formed immediately and has identified 14 families in the Ramona area who they are

assisting. They are committed for the “recovery” phase as well and have monthly work days for their specific projects. (See [www.SolanaPres.org/Events/279648.aspx](http://www.SolanaPres.org/Events/279648.aspx) for dates and contacts.) One of the activities they are known for is building sheds.

### **What is our committee accomplishing?**

The initial activities for the San Diego PDAC were to become involved with VOAD and to share information and opportunities on mission amongst the committee and the congregations. We have representatives at VOAD, the Regional Community Recovery Team (county wide) meetings and the Unmet Needs committee of this group. Case Managers in the various Community Recovery Teams present cases to this committee and request additional funding to assist the various families. The funding agencies are non-governmental agencies (e.g.: Am. Red Cross, Salvation Army, and faith based organizations.) Our committee has prepared a proposal to national PDA for funding to work through this committee with our mission.

The week of June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the SD Presbytery hosted 38 youth and adults from Virginia Beach, Virginia. This group stayed at Iglesia Presbiteriana Hispana working on projects in that area as well as building sheds in the remote areas of Protero, Barrett and Deerhorne.

### **Come and join us:**

The primary focus of (national) PDA is to work with the Presbytery to assist the churches to provide the mission activities to the community. The SD PDAC is focused on this vision and these early activities are just the beginning of a mission from our Presbytery to our community. The more information we have about the activities of the 31 churches in the Presbytery, the more we can assist to disseminate information among our congregations regarding those projects, needs and mission opportunities and disaster preparedness.

If your congregation does not have a Congregational Response Coordinator  
please consider identifying one.

If you are a Congregational Response Coordinator or interested in disaster response and recovery activities please consider joining us as we define our next areas of focus and identify opportunities to minister to our community during the long recovery from this disaster.

If your church is also involved in Fire Relief activities, please let us know.

Next meeting of the SD PDAC is July 22, 10:30 am at Rancho Bernardo Community Presbyterian church. Please **RSVP** if you are able to attend.

Contacts:

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