

Things Elizabeth and I learned during Wood River flooding in March 2019 that may be applicable in a pandemic. It's pretty basic, but in times of disaster, you will rely on the "basics." Also, this is based on our experience and our community. I am sure that it will be different in every context and community!

1. **Communicate regularly.** This means communication to a group of people that you are accountable or sharing information you receive with your group. If your people (whoever they are) are affected by an event of some kind, communicate regularly. This includes explaining *why* you made a decision. Even if there is no new information, tell people this. *No news IS news in a disaster.* Regular contact through a chosen medium minimizes rumors and builds trust (Facebook is what the fire department used in Wood River during the flood).
2. **Trust your local authorities.** At least in our area, our local officials are generally good intentioned, earnest, and competent. Be in communication with them. As a pastor, you will find that you may be surprised to learn how much power you have during a disaster. *Local officials will see you as an important and trusted voice, with the ability to communicate with a large population of locals that they may not reach otherwise.* They also will recognize that you, as a member of denomination, can mobilize denominational resources from outside the community (volunteers, financial aid, donations).
3. **As a pastor of a church, you are important.** Be in communication with your local authorities. Emergency Management, Fire Department, Police Department, EMS, Health Department, Mayor/City Office. Other non-profits can also be important connections. In our area, the United Way has provided effective leadership by bringing different voices to the table. If you want to help during a disaster and aren't sure how, begin making phone calls. *Someone, somewhere, knows is needed. Find them. If they don't know what is needed, they will have a phone number for the person you should talk to.* Be persistent and don't be offended if people are grumpy. Show them grace. They're probably under a lot of stress and have had little sleep. In Wood River during the flood, our fire chief was getting less than one hour of sleep each night. This lasted for around five days.
4. **Show up.** Be present in your community. *It is meaningful for a community to have their pastors invested in community health and betterment.* In a disaster "show up" will vary based on the type of disaster (a pandemic is different than a flood). If there isn't a disaster currently happening, "showing up" means attending community meetings, volunteering for local organizations, and building relationships with different institutions in your town. This includes non-profit organizations, city officials, fire department, EMS, Library, community coffee groups, etc. In a time of disaster, these relationships will be very valuable.

Matt and Elizabeth Troyer-Miller