

Clergy Response Team of Maryland

This report was prepared on behalf of the Clergy Response Team (CRT) of Maryland and approved by the Board of the CRT. The purpose of this report is to introduce the CRT by providing:

1. Background and rationale for its inception
2. The vision and purpose of the CRT
3. The growth, development and current status of the CRT
4. Current and future needs of the CRT required to fulfill its mission

BACKGROUND

On April 20, 1999, in the small suburban town of Littleton, Colorado, two high school seniors enacted an all out assault on Columbine High School during the middle of the school day. The boys' plan was to kill hundreds of their peers. With guns, knives, and a multitude of bombs, the two boys walked the hallways and killed. When the day was done twelve students, one teacher, and the two murderers were dead. Subsequent investigation revealed that only a portion of the 99 bombs they carried in the school actually detonated and exploded. Otherwise, over 500 students scheduled to be in the cafeteria at 11:15 a.m. when the first lunch period began, may have also died that day. Fortunately, the propane bombs in the cafeteria timed to explode at 11:17 a.m. failed.

The Columbine school tragedy shocked our country. In the aftermath, communities and school districts across the nation lost a sense of innocence and realized the need to be prepared to respond to future emergencies. While such tragedies affect the whole country they occur in communities. It is the community and how it responds that can impact the extent of the tragedy and facilitate physical, emotional and spiritual healing.

After the Columbine incident in April 1999, Bishop Larry Lee Thomas had a meeting with Dr. Parham Superintendent of the Anne Arundel Co. Board of Education as well as Police Commissioner Shannahan. Bishop Thomas was asked to help put together a team of clergy that would be able to respond if a Columbine incident or similar emergency would occur in Anne Arundel Co. The idea was not only to use the clergy in assisting in such situations but to utilize the church facilities as well; thus securing a safer environment for children and parents to be assisted, comforted and interviewed as necessary away from the scene of the incident. As a result of this request and needs, the Clergy Response Team was established at that time.

On September 11, 2001 this country was attacked by terrorist raising the need for appropriate preparedness and response in a sundry of emergency situations. After 911 the Clergy Response Team was contacted by Lt. Gov. Townsend's office and asked to expand our vision to include any kind of emergency state wide.

As a result of these tragedies as well as natural disasters like hurricane Isabel in Maryland and Katrina in the gulf coast the Clergy Response Team of Maryland continued to organize, train and establish itself as an essential resource to the community in times of need.

The clergy and ministries have generally been untrained and disorganized and thereby an untapped resource in times of emergencies and tragedies. The CRT of Maryland will serve to correct this situation.

ABSTRACT

At present the Clergy Response Team of Maryland consists of over 34 ministries. At least 25 ministers have completed certification in basic Critical Incident Stress Management training to date.

Through extensive outreach efforts the Clergy Response Team of Maryland has been able to establish a working relationship and association with 'Peace for the City' which is an organization of 193 churches throughout Baltimore City and surrounding counties and the United Black Clergy of Anne Arundel County which includes approximately 39 ministries. The CRT of Maryland has access to a network of approximately 250 churches and ministries in Annapolis, Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Carroll County, Howard County, Harford County, Montgomery County, Prince Georges County, as well as various ministries in Southern Maryland, Eastern Shore, Delaware and Washington, D.C.

Numerous ministries and organizations in various counties have contacted the Clergy Response Team to express interest and desire in serving the community in time of need or emergencies. Some are interested in offering their facilities, various services and resources. Others have expressed a desire for training to be able to provide services and intervention on a formal and efficient basis in support of the Emergency Services/first responders. Therefore, we have been and continue to be involved in exploring and coordinating training to prepare clergy to respond in a sundry of emergencies.

As the agent bridging and connecting various ministries in numerous communities, the CRT of Maryland continues to expand and create a crisis response network. The CRT serves as the coordinating agent and communication source to organize a variety of otherwise unrelated ministries in various jurisdictions.

While one focus of the CRT is to develop and expand a trained network of clergy responders and ministry resources, it is crucial to be able to access and deploy services/resources in emergencies. As a responsive organization the CRT will maintain an accurate data base of trained clergy responders, support systems, knowledge of available church facilities, lines of communications/contacts and detailed information related to the network of services and resources. Maintaining an internal communication network will assure accurate information and accountability as it impacts the functioning and responsiveness in time of need.

In addition to the need for internal communication and coordination of ministries and clergy, the CRT has found within the crisis response system that frequently the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. In fact, sometimes the right hand doesn't even know the left hand exists. Communication within organizations as well as between organizations can and often does limit coordination and response. The role of the CRT is to be the agent of communication and coordination between the network of ministries within the CRT organization as well as represent this organization in partnership with the full range of crisis services and programs.

The Clergy Response Team of Maryland has a strong identity, focus and through its ministries, a personal and intimate relationship to the community it serves. It is our desire to be a partner and coordinate our services with other organizations charged with the responsibility to respond in emergencies. We have and will continue to be in contact with Governor Ehrlich's office, the

Maryland Interfaith Recovery Team (MIRT), the Maryland Volunteer Organization Activated Disaster Team (MVOAD), CISM Training and others.

It is the goal and desire of the CRT to provide the best possible training to its members and maintain a high standard of preparedness. Communication and services will be offered to the community to provide support, assistance and resources as needed in times of emergency.

In addition to responding to tragedies and emergencies the CRT has also been called to assist the community on a daily basis as well. As members of the communities they serve, clergy regularly impact the lives of those who attend a church as well as those with no religious or church affiliation. Churches provide their facilities to various groups and organizations for meetings unrelated to the church/religion itself. Often the church serves as the site for pre-school programs, Boy and Girl Scout meetings, addiction services/meetings, community groups and programs as well as voting polls. The clergy recognize that in many ways they are the community they serve. Hence, the clergy and churches' influence frequently transcends religion to serve the community beyond the walls of the church building.

In providing ongoing service to the community, members of the CRT also participate in the Ministry of Presence program. This program provides a clergy presence in and around schools to assist and support students, teachers and school administrators. Clergy have access to school grounds including court yards and surrounding areas as well as lunchrooms, hallways and interior areas. The clergy provide support to nurture student adjustment, sense of security and reduce tension, anxiety within the school environment. Clergy are on site and available to assist in any school related incident or emergency as appropriate.

Additional ongoing services provided by members of the CRT include regularly scheduled hospital visitation. As part of the 'Pastoral Care Team' of the Baltimore/Washington Medical Center (previously North Arundel Hospital) and other area hospitals we make rounds within the hospital including the emergency room, ICU, CCU, Special units and the nursing stations on each floor. We visit, pray, counsel and spiritually, emotionally support/assist patients and their families.

It is the vision and purpose of the CRT to be prepared/trained to provide immediate assistance and intervention in times of tragedy and emergency. But also provide assistance and support to the community in an ongoing daily basis through schools, hospitals and direct referrals to individuals/families in need.

FUTURE OF CRT of MARYLAND

The Clergy Response Team of Maryland has established an extensive network of churches and ministries in numerous communities to date. However, the desire and vision to carry this assignment state wide is a daunting task to the few volunteer pastors serving on the Board of Directors at this time. It is a demanding task to maintain the organization as it exists much less continue the expansion, coordination and training into every region and community throughout Maryland.

In the endeavor to realize our state-wide vision, the CRT of Maryland Board of Directors has appointed an Executive Director who serves on a voluntary, part-time basis. This position serves under the supervision of the Board of Directors and is responsible for the day to day operation of the organization including:

1. Organize and pursue outreach by contacting churches, major denominations and ministries through-out Maryland promoting crisis response needs and information.
2. Coordinate education and training for all clergy and ministries who seek to participate in crisis situations.
3. Assessment and coordination of facilities, resources and services available through the churches and members of CRT in times of need. Maintain information/records of locations, access, limitations/restrictions and contacts to implement service and/or response.
4. Responsibility for communication within the CRT organization, including: disseminate the information, respond to members questions, needs or concerns, secure local contacts, establish and maintain open lines of communication.
5. Responsibility for communication with other agencies, organizations, programs and services. As a partner in association with other crisis response organizations it is crucial that communication and coordination are maintained regularly, not just during a crisis situation. The communication and relationship between churches and ministries within the CRT of Maryland as well as the relationship between the CRT of Maryland and other crisis response organizations are crucial to helping the community in need.
6. Maintain up-to-date data base including accurate files on facilities, resources, services, training, members (contact people) as well as anticipated community needs.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

The plan of the CRT is to establish and maintain at least 20 trained clergy and church facilities in each of Maryland's 23 counties and Baltimore City. Each county and Baltimore City has been sub-divided into four districts with at least five clergy/churches assigned per district.

Our goal is to secure a base of no less than 480 CRT members (clergy-churches) state wide that are trained and prepared to assist first responders in any crisis/emergency situation.

The CRT is identifying churches/ministries in communities throughout Maryland and establishing contact by correspondence, telephone and e-mail. Once interest and availability of the church/ministry is determined, follow up assessment, education/training and participation as a member of the CRT of Maryland will be established. Contacts with churches/ministries as members of the CRT may include on site visits as well as regular telephone, correspondence and e-mails to update our data base on facilities, resources, services, training, members (contact people/staff) as well as anticipated community needs and support.

The CRT is conducting a systematic search for interested/available churches/ministries county by county through the faith community, public records, public service advertising, seminars and various events to publicize these organizations and services.

At present there are also various faith organizations and denominational programs that seek to provide assistance and support in times of disaster. Organizations and programs such as; Maryland Interfaith Response Team, United Methodist Church Balto/Wash. Conference, Peninsula Conference, Lutheran Relief Services, Baptist Relief Service, Associated Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, and others serving Maryland provide a valuable service and

resource to the community in times of need. The CRT of Maryland is seeking to establish a partnership with these organizations/programs to enhance communication and coordination of services, response and assistance to communities as needed.

While the CRT of Maryland accepts and respects the autonomy of these organizations/programs a partnership and working relationship to enhance communication, coordination, delivery of services and response is crucial in emergencies/disasters.

The CRT of Maryland has also become aware of small clusters (3 or 4) of churches/ministries who have organized themselves to various degrees to respond to their extended communities in emergencies/disasters. These clusters of churches/ministries could benefit from disaster and crisis training as well as the support provided by the CRT. These clusters often feel isolated and inadequately equipped/prepared to assist the community. Again, they are ready and willing but desire the training and support of a larger organization to communicate/organize with other churches/ministries to be able to respond in a more effective and efficient manner.

Therefore another role/function of the CRT of Maryland will be to provide the network and support system to these clusters of churches/ministries. Organizing these clusters into a larger state wide program will benefit both the clusters and the citizens throughout Maryland in time of crisis/disasters.

SUPPORT FOR THE CRT

To date, the CRT of Maryland has no budget, source of funding or financial resources. We access church donations and resources to cover clerical, support staff, office supplies, copying, mailing, e-mail, and work space. Volunteers regularly pay expenses i.e. travel, gas, tolls, parking, food and supplies themselves with limited or no reimbursement. It is also our hope to establish a web site in order to better communicate with CRT members and the community it serves. While lack of financial support may hinder the CRT, we continue to pursue this noble calling to serve our community and state.

The birth of the CRT of Maryland was the result of requests from government officials in response to tragedies and disasters. The growth and development of the CRT of Maryland has been the product of the charity, commitment, love of God and community and divine call of a few pastors. To continue this effort we are in need of funding and assistance. We can provide an essential, extensive and community centered service that is at the ready day or night. The churches/clergy relationship within the community is like no other. While they are willing and ready we are seeking your support to make them able to respond appropriately and efficiently. . Your assistance would enable the CRT of Maryland to go to the next level and reach the religious community across the state and train, coordinate and establish a comprehensive network of community based crisis responders, facilities and resources.

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