

THE POLICY TO MEET NEEDS ARISING FROM MAJOR DISASTERS
OF
THE COMMITTEE ON DIACONAL MINISTRIES
OF
THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Provisional Draft

1. Definition of Major Disaster

A major disaster is a calamity which arises suddenly and unexpectedly resulting from an identifiable natural or man-made event like an earthquake, volcano, flood, hurricane (or typhoon), famine caused by drought, or war, which directly injures the persons and property of tens of thousands of persons in a defined geographic area.

2. Procedure for Major Disasters Outside of the United States

a. Requests for diaconal assistance in meeting needs arising from major disasters outside of the United States shall originate and be evaluated as follows:

- (1) In countries to which the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is currently sending foreign missionaries, a request for assistance should originate with the OP Mission in that country, either from an official request by the indigenous Reformed church with whom the OPC is working through the Mission, or, if there is no such church, by the Mission itself. The Mission's request should be forwarded to the Committee on Foreign Missions (CFM), which shall, in turn, send it on to the Committee on Diaconal Ministries (CDM).
- (2) In countries to which the OPC is not currently sending foreign missionaries, a request for assistance should originate in the appropriate assembly (or agency thereof) of an indigenous Reformed church with whom the OPC has a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship within the country (or, if there is no such church, in the broadest assembly, or an appropriate agency thereof, of any indigenous Reformed church in the country) and be forwarded to the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR) which shall, in turn, send it on to the CDM.
- (3) In sending a request on to the CDM, the CFM or the CEIR shall:
 - (a) Indicate whether it concurs with granting the request before sending it on, and if it does not concur with the request, it shall communicate to the CDM the reasons for its non-concurrence;
 - (b) Include any other pertinent information which it believes may be helpful to the CDM in evaluating the request, and
 - (c) Indicate whether it believes the church requesting such assistance has developed appropriate biblical guidelines to assist those making the actual distribution of the diaconal aid.
- (4) The CDM shall evaluate the request in accordance with its own policies, and, if it determines to proceed, it shall do so in coordination with the CFM or CEIR (as appropriate), the goal being to ensure that, as far as is possible, the distribution of aid is accompanied by a Reformed ministry of the Word. Either the CDM or the CEIR may request the assistance of the CFM in evaluating a request for aid, which the CFM will endeavor to provide if such does not unduly hinder the ministry of the Word it has already undertaken. Such evaluation and a decision to grant aid shall be made by the CDM (or its Executive Committee, subject to review by the CDM).

- b. If, after evaluating a request for diaconal assistance according to the principles given above, the CDM believes that making either (i) a special appeal to the congregations of the OPC for funds, material or personnel to help meet that need, or (ii) a disbursement from its unbudgeted cash reserves B or both B is warranted, the CDM is authorized to make that special appeal and / or disbursement. However, if either the CFM or the CEIR does not concur with the granting of the request, then no such appeal to the congregations or disbursement from cash reserves shall be made until the matter is reviewed by the general assembly. The total amount raised by each special appeal thereunder shall be reported to the next general assembly.
 - c. Wherever possible, the actual distribution of diaconal aid, whether in goods or cash, shall be made by the ordained diaconate of the indigenous Reformed church. If there is no such diaconate, the distribution shall be made by the ordained officers of the indigenous Reformed church. If there are no such officers, or if there is no such church, then the distribution shall be made by the OP Mission (or if none, missions of other Reformed churches with whom the OPC has a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship) in that country. Insofar as is possible, decisions regarding the distribution of diaconal aid to any particular individual or family shall never be made by one man acting alone.
 - d. Before transmitting funds or goods for distribution, the CDM shall determine that those handling the actual distribution of the diaconal aid provided by the OPC through the CDM have developed appropriate biblical guidelines to ensure an equitable distribution of the aid received, and if no guidelines are in place, it shall assist the distributor in the development of the same. The CDM may request the assistance of the CFM (usually by its personnel already in the field) in developing such guidelines. The CFM will endeavor to provide such assistance if it does not unduly hinder the ministry of the Word the CFM has already undertaken.
 - e. Those handling the actual distribution of the diaconal aid provided by the OPC through the CDM shall provide to the CDM a detailed accounting of all funds and goods received within six months of receiving such for distribution. The names of individual recipients need not be included in the accounting made to the CDM, but they should be in the files of the distributor and available to an auditor.
 - f. Both the CFM and the CEIR will develop appropriate mechanisms to enable them to discharge their responsibilities thereunder in a timely and expeditious manner and communicate them to the CDM. Communications in this regard to the CDM, the CFM, of the CEIR shall be directed to the CDM=s secretary, the CFM=s general secretary, or the CEIR=s chairman, respectively.
 - g. When the CDM has determined to render such aid, it shall communicate this to the whole church in a timely fashion.
5. Procedure for Major Disasters in the United States.
- a. Ordinarily emergency disaster aid will be considered only in those areas where OP churches or presbyteries are able to be directly involved in its administration. Exceptions may be made only in the event of truly major disasters and when aid will be administered in accordance with biblical principles by a responsible agency of a NAPARC church or other Reformed church with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship.
 - b. In the event of a disaster, requests for aid should come to the CDM from responsible agents of the affected presbyteries or from responsible agents of another Reformed church (as stated above). Any member of the CDM may call OP presbyters nearest the scene of a disaster to learn if there is need for assistance. The Executive Committee shall evaluate the need for assistance and the extent and nature of the need, decide if aid shall be given by or through the CDM, and determine the most effective steps feasible to render such aid.

- c. The CDM and / or its Executive Committee shall evaluate all requests for aid in accordance with its own policies, and, if it determines to proceed, it shall do so by means that comport with the biblical principles that should govern such ministry.
- d. The CDM may give aid in one or both of two ways:
 - (1) by sending emergency financial aid immediately to the church(es) or designated presbytery agents who will administer the aid locally (and communicate this to the whole church in a timely fashion), or
 - (2) by sending an immediate appeal to the churches for gifts of money, material, or volunteer help, as deemed appropriate.