



## Disaster Preparedness Workshop Remarks

### *"Congregations Responding to Everyday Disasters"*

April 30, 2014

Michael G. Pappas, Executive Director

Greetings and welcome to the San Francisco Interfaith Council's 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial Disaster Preparedness Workshop for Congregations. My name is Michael Pappas, Executive Director of the Council.

A quarter of a century ago, in the aftermath of the devastating Loma Prieta earthquake, faith leaders were asked to assist in the distribution of humanitarian aid to those displaced. The religious community's response to that event and our City's homeless crisis gave birth to the SFIC and ever since disaster preparedness, response and recovery have been central to the Council's mission. Realizing that we live in vulnerable territory and that the faith community has a moral responsibility to respond, in 2006, shortly after Hurricane Katrina, the SFIC held its first Disaster Preparedness Workshop for Congregations at this very site ... and subsequently, every two years, we've gathered congregation leaders from throughout the City to become better prepared and to build those relationships that will make a difference in San Francisco's times of greatest need.

Although the faith community possesses incredible resources in our physical facilities and ability to mobilize congregants, we realize that we can't go it alone. As stakeholders in our City's resilient disaster preparedness equation, we are privileged to count as our partners in this effort the SF Department of Emergency, the SF Police and Fire Departments, the SF Human Services Agency, the American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter, SF CARD and The San Francisco Foundation. Key representatives from each of these entities have worked tirelessly with the SFIC in the planning of this workshop.

Past workshops have focused exclusively on the faith community's response to catastrophic disasters. This year's theme, *"Congregations Responding to Everyday Disasters,"* will examine the role of the faith community in responding to the needs of those impacted by fires, floods, and other regularly occurring crises.

The first half of the workshop will offer a comprehensive survey of local disasters over the past two years in the context of *"A Remembrance Service."* This spiritual moment will be followed by two survivor testimonies facilitated by a skilled mental health professional. *"A Chaplain's Reflection"* will help to further accentuate the spiritual as well as practical needs of survivors of such disasters.

The second half will provide a window into the thought process and strategizing that happens at key response agencies when a disaster occurs, as well as their expectations of what assistance faith partners might provide. Based on those remarks, you all, seated by neighborhood, will engage in two facilitated discussions addressing the key questions: a) In what ways can congregations realistically be helpful in meeting the needs of people being impacted by local disasters and b) What resources do congregations need to effectively help those impacted by disaster.

As San Francisco has become the epicenter for groundbreaking developments in technology, this workshop will employ technology to interactively engage your ideas and share them with the greater community. Our friends from Bayshare, a cooperative of our City's sharing economy tech firms as well as Twitter will be tweeting and aggregating your inspired thoughts during the tabletop portion of this workshop.

Next steps will include the completion of a survey assessing congregation resources as well as an invitation for attendees to become congregation contacts with first responder agencies. In return, the agencies will share important reference materials with you all.

Food for today's gathering was provided by the Salvation Army, another partner in our disaster preparedness work. We also want to thank our staff, volunteers and today's table discussion facilitators.

We are particularly thankful to the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption for almost a decade of hospitality in hosting this event. Most importantly, we owe an incredible debt of gratitude to our City's philanthropic community, in particular, the Walter & Elise Haas Fund, without whose generosity this event would not have been possible.

At this time, it is my distinct privilege to welcome a very dear friend and supporter of the San Francisco Interfaith Council and a true visionary leader, our Mayor Edwin M. Lee!