



Disaster Preparedness Workshop Remarks

“Crisis to Resilience: Congregations Understanding and Responding to Climate Change Impacts”

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Michael G. Pappas, Executive Director

Good morning, I’m Michael Pappas, Executive Director of the San Francisco Interfaith Council and on behalf of the SFIC and our partners in disaster preparedness: The American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter, Archdiocese of San Francisco, California Interfaith Power and Light, SF Departments of Emergency Management, Public Health, Human Services Agency, the Neighborhood Empowerment Network, Salvation Army, San Francisco Agencies Responding to Disaster and The San Francisco Foundation, allow me to welcome you to the 6th Biennial Disaster Preparedness Workshop for Congregations. We especially want to thank our friends and colleagues here at St. Mary’s Cathedral for hosting us along with the CHEFS Program at Episcopal Community Services, a program which trains the formerly homeless for careers in the food service profession, for providing the refreshments we are enjoying this morning.

From the issuing of Pope Francis’s radically bold Laudato Si, Encyclical on the Environment to the historic United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Paris and recently signed on Earth Day by 177 official representatives of UN member countries, to the more local heat waves and threats of El Nino storms, more and more, the impact of climate change has become the serious focus of those being called upon to prepare for and respond to disasters. Congregations and communities of faith are and have always been key stakeholders in that equation ... as such the Planning Committee for this workshop felt the topic a timely and critical theme to shine a light on today. It is our hope that the speakers, panel presentation and interactive exercise will embolden and equip each and every one of you with that conversant appreciation needed to go back to your congregations and be effective ambassadors on this critical issue.

A word about today's program, in just a few moments you will receive an official welcome from the City by San Francisco's Chief Resiliency Officer Patrick Otellini. Patrick will briefly speak to us about the 100 Resilient Cities Program, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the report just published outlining San Francisco's Resilience Strategy, all in the context of climate change as a form of disaster.

He will be followed by our Keynote Speaker Rev. Dr. Ambrose Carroll, Co-Founder of an organization called "Green The Church." In his remarks Rev. Carroll will embolden us to take the next step in addressing climate change by sharing inspiring stories of the extraordinary work already being undertaken by ordinary congregations just like yours.

Climate Change is expected to more seriously affect the health and well-being of communities that are least able to prepare for, cope and recover from the impacts. To respond to this challenge, the City and County of San Francisco's Climate and Health Program is successfully addressing the public health impact of climate change by leveraging data-driven planning and health indicators to create policies around climate adaptation on a local level. In their presentation "10 Things Everyone Should Know About Climate Change," Cyndy Comerford and Matt Wolff of the Department of Public Health will cover the health impacts from climate change and give an overview on how climate change will impact San Francisco.

In the panel to follow, "Inspiration, Connections, and Resources for Action", moderated by The San Francisco Foundation's Disaster Resiliency Officer Andrea Zussman, you will hear from four dynamic leaders about what city departments, congregations and faith-based organizations, and other nonprofits are doing to slow climate change, reduce its impacts on communities, and support community response and recovery efforts. You will also learn about resources and training you can tap to take action for your own congregation or organization.

Notice that you are seated by neighborhood. We did this intentionally so that you can better get to know your neighbors. After a short break you will have the opportunity to roll up your sleeves and get to work. The Director of our City's Neighborhood Empowerment Network, Daniel Homsey, will lead us in an interactive tabletop exercise entitled, "Neighborhood Asset Mapping." San Francisco has launched an ambitious new program that empowers organizations to be conveners at the neighborhood level and create networks around the mission of resilience. This exercise will introduce you to the Empowered Communities Program and its HUB platform. By building community in your community you will learn how to find local stakeholders and turn them into partners.

We will conclude with an opportunity to reflect on this morning's experience and giving meaning to our role as diverse communities of faith responding to the impacts of

climate change by offering up with a unified voice the, “San Francisco Interfaith Council Covenant for Climate Resilience.”

Just a final word before we proceed. When crafting this program, the planning committee was acutely aware that these are challenging economic times for our City’s congregations. With a growing gap in affordability, income inequality and radical demographic shifts, we recognize that the demand on our congregations to do more with less is a real struggle. As you participate today, the enormity of what will be imparted to you is not intended to overwhelm you, nor is it intended that you should leave here today having had a pleasant and informative experience, but do nothing until the next workshop in two years. Rather, we hope and pray that once you process all you will experience, you will figure out, each in your own way, how to share it with the governing bodies of your respective houses of worship and integrate the resources and call to action into the priority missions of your congregations. Thank you.