



A Shower Trailer Ministry

Introduction to MNA Disaster Response:

Part of the ministry of Mission to North America is to coordinate response to disasters for the Presbyterian Church in America. MNA has been assigned this task by the General Assembly. This assignment is a result of the PCA seeing the important opportunities for very practical deeds of mercy that advance God's Kingdom through the ministry of disaster response. Since the four hurricanes that criss-crossed Florida in 2004, the catastrophic hurricanes of 2005 – Katrina, Rita and Wilma, the tornadoes of 2006, the wildfires, tornadoes and flooding of 2007, the great Iowa Flood and hurricanes Ike and Gustav of 2008, the Texas wildfires of 2009, and the Mississippi tornado and Nashville flooding of 2010, MNA has mobilized more than 60,000 volunteers.

The role of MNA Disaster Response is to come alongside presbyteries and churches as they prepare for and respond to disasters. Part of the vision of MNA is that the presbyteries would already have in place a viable disaster response ministry, and be prepared and ready to respond if and when disaster strikes their member churches. When the presbytery is overwhelmed or not prepared to respond, they most always invite MNA to come alongside and coordinate the response. MNA brings capable, experienced leadership, and a strategy and structure to assist the presbytery in helping the PCA recover and to reach out in Christ through tangible deeds of mercy to their affected neighbors.

When a disaster strikes, MNA Disaster Response puts several actions in motion including the following:

- Sending in assessment teams made up of Disaster Response Key Leaders and First Responders, most of whom serve as volunteers, to meet with local church and community leaders. The assessors determine the scope of the need and whether volunteers can meet that need.
- The assessment team surveys church physical plants to assess repair needs. They further determine if the church facilities can be utilized to house volunteers; if the church is adequate for sleeping and meal preparation. Also they will determine if the church facility can be utilized as a shelter, or as a supply distribution center (food, water, cleaning supplies, clothing, etc.). When the assessment is complete a report is made to MNA including a recommendation of whether or not a worksite should be established.
- If the assessors determine that a worksite is needed, MNA begins recruiting and mobilizing first response teams. The primary function of these teams is to assist the local church leadership get back on their feet as soon as possible so they can in turn help the congregation get on their feet. They will stabilize and secure the church building and begin the process of establishing a worksite for future teams.

The Need for Shower Trailers:

"We can ask our trained first responders to sleep in tents and eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, but at the end of very difficult days they must have adequate showers. Many times those volunteers are working heroically, in sweltering, nasty conditions. It is only proper for us to provide the tools they need to serve us" **Arkie Hooten, MNA Disaster Response Director**

Once the decision is made to establish a worksite at a particular church, the most immediate need in most cases is for shower facilities. Most PCA churches do not actually have shower facilities in their existing facilities, which leaves a need for showers to be supplied. The best means to do this is with a shower trailer.

Following the decision to set up a work site, a Site Manager will be mobilized to coordinate the work for the volunteers. The desire is to mobilize Shower Trailer teams at the same time as the Site Manager.

How would it work?

Ideally, a presbytery would form a team made up of volunteers from member churches. This team would purchase a shower trailer and serve as a First Response Team. Additionally, volunteers from other presbyteries who serve as First Responders could also assist in serving with this team if needed.

- A shower trailer deployment team would typically be 2 men (or women), equipped with a pickup truck to haul the trailer. The team should be self-contained and capable of self-subsistence for at least a few days. Trucks with camper boxes on the beds work best in case a need exists for the team to overnight. Ideally they would arrive, set up the shower trailer, insure it is functioning well, turn it over to the Site Manager and return home. Of course if they would like to serve as volunteers with the work projects they would be welcome to stay and serve according to their availability.
- After an event is over, the team would return to the worksite to retrieve the trailer. The trailer would be taken back home, maintenance performed, and readied for the next disaster.
(NOTE: In 2008 alone, these trailers would have been used at three different events.)

The team members would probably consist of those with a mechanical aptitude and a pioneering, adventurous spirit. Retired folks would be good team members and might have the necessary time to commit.

Additional thoughts:

The shower trailer ministry should include the following:

- An operation and deployment structure. This would include having a number of volunteers trained on the setup and operation of the trailer, as well as having a current list of these trained volunteers. Disasters cannot be planned so availability of volunteers varies according to their existing time commitments, making necessary a list of potential volunteers.
- A financial structure. Cost of a shower trailer is about \$25,000. A budget should include upkeep, insurance, and deployment costs. The presbytery may want to consider the cost of the purchase of a pickup truck as part of this ministry as well. The first year will be the most expensive, as it will include the purchase cost. Most years it is anticipated that the budget might only be \$4,000 or so.

(NOTE: MNA is willing to help with the initial purchase of the trailer if needed.)

Our hope is to have three or four of these trailers available regionally so that one is ever further than a one day drive.

To Build or To Buy:

MNA understands that you may have the ability to build one of these trailers. Let's talk about that if you are so inclined. We have looked at this for some time now, considered all the issues, and at this point it seems that buying the trailer is the best method. However, this is not set in stone and we are open to further discussions.



