

## Flooding Update

Flooding... South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia, Louisiana, North East Iowa... It seems that each week brings a new disaster. It has become an unfortunate rhythm of the new normal. Yet the rhythm of recovery is the same for all.

First is “emergency response”, then the shift to “long-term recovery” and the years of actual long-term recovery. Here in WV we are in the shift period, when committees and processes are being born. This is a critical time for communities to take a deep breath and to make strategic decisions about how and what they want to rebuild. It is a time of speeding up and slowing down. The survivors want to speed through this time to recover and rebuild their homes and lives, but the process seems to slow as volunteer groups move into place to support long term response and to marshal their resources.

Leadership groups gather in each community and try to make the best choices about how to use the available resources that are at their disposal for a short time. The questions they face are not easy. What do we want our town to look like in 10-20 years? Do we rebuild just as we were in the past or do we take the opportunity to choose a new path? Can we make space for new business and jobs? How do we support the businesses and jobs already here but damaged by the flooding? How do we insure the future safety of the people of this town? Can we put in place systems now that can ensure the future of our community? What systems are out dated and need to be changed to make it work?

They are huge questions that require the best thinking of all. In many of our flooded areas leadership is stressed. Everyone is overwhelmed by the daily struggle to make ends meet, to find safe secure housing and to support family and friends affected by the most recent disaster.

What is the role of the church in this in between time? Can the people in our congregations rise to the challenge and take an active part in these conversations?

Having been in and out of many of our churches, both large and small, every one of our congregations has people who are well educated, thoughtful and skilled at participating on committees, leading discussions and making good decisions for the greater good.

Please, as you continue to pray for the flood survivors and the continuing process of recovery for our state, choose to lift up in prayer as well as encourage those within your congregations whom God might be calling to participate in the process of long term recovery. They may be called to leadership positions or to be the ones who organize solutions, or to listen well to the hope and vision that are emerging and work to make those hopes a reality. Listen for God’s call and respond.