



Report on the 2019 Mountain West VOAD Conference

April 28-30, 2019

It was my pleasure to represent the national UCC Disaster Ministries program at the 2019 Mountain West VOAD Conference, held at Central Valley Baptist Church in Meridian, Idaho. However, it is a full day of travel to get there.

The event began on Sunday evening with a networking dinner prepared by VOAD member, Operation BarBQ Relief. This was one of three meals that were prepared and served by VOAD members who have a feeding component in their mission. The others were the Southern Baptists and the Salvation Army. It was a good idea for the participants to learn more about what people in a shelter might receive as a meal.

Monday morning was heavy on keynote speeches. Mountain West VOAD President, Aaron Titus, the creator of Crisis Cleanup, the software program we now use in PA following an event, presented his 10 mistakes that we usually make in a response. He was very enlightening.

Aaron was followed by a speech by Michael O'Hare, FEMA Region 10 Administrator, who talked about the responses over the past year in Region 10, as well as changes in FEMA procedures.

Next up was me, who had the task of presenting the story of the Long Term Recovery Committee in Philadelphia and the work we have done with the evacuees from Puerto Rico. The presentation was well-received and I had many discussions with participants over the next few days.

During the conference I attended these workshops:

1. Occupational Stress First Aid – a program of the Southern Baptists for emotional care
2. Integrated Care Condolence Teams – the Red Cross death notification program
3. Caring for Children in Tough Times – the Brethren Disaster Children's program
4. The Story of Team Rubicon

On Tuesday there was the MWVOAD Annual Meeting and reports from the individual state VOADs..

The Mountain West VOAD is an effort to bolster relationships and capabilities between states that experience similar challenges in response. The biggest concern of all the member organizations is a big earthquake. The states involved with MWVOAD are Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Montana, Wyoming and Colorado.

This was a good experience. This region of the country has not had good participation from the UCC in VOAD activities. It was good to have these discussions with the participants and learn more so that we can recruit UCC folk to get involved with disaster ministries and with MWVOAD.

This trip was funded cooperatively by MWVOAD, UCC DM, PSEC, and me.

Shalom,
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