



**PRELIMINARY FINDINGS:
FAITH-BASED RESPONSE TO
INCIDENTS
OF PUBLIC VIOLENCE**

May 2002

f i n d i n g s



© 2002 Village Life Company

Table of Contents

Introduction3
 Conceptualization of the Exploratory Study4

Preliminary Research4
 Background Information:
 Existing National Emergency Response Organizations5
 Defining an Incidence of Public Violence5
 Literature Review
 An Exploratory Study: Methodological Considerations7
 Final Interview Statistics and High-level Profiles8
 Summary of Responses9
 Tangible Deliverables Wanted13
 Summary14

References16

Addendum: Wilkensburg Shooting: A Case Study19

Internet Web Sites23

► Introduction

Incidences of public violence in America have dramatically increased over the last decade. As reported in the national media, a timeline of ongoing public violence – in schools, work places, restaurants, churches, synagogues, and childcare centers - has tragically unfolded.

In some cases, the faith-based community has been integrally involved in every aspect of the response – assisting in the immediate mitigation of the violence by offering safety and security within the walls of their churches, and giving critical counseling and spiritual aid to the immediate survivors. But in other cases, they have not been involved at all.

In the face of public violence, the media often calls upon the local faith community for public commentary or understanding of the incidence. Whether local religious leaders are ready or not, they are often called upon to serve as moral commentators after a community is thrown into chaos by violence. The local faith community may also provide ongoing relief from the damaging effects of the violence to the community and develop longer-term strategies for preventing further incidents of violence.

The need for involvement of faith-based organizations varies by community and incident. For instance, while police were still negotiating with a gunman who killed three people then took hostages in Wilkesburg, PA in Spring 2000, the faith community was already responding by counseling survivors at a church next door. In another instance, when a gunman opened fire at an Internet consulting firm in Wakefield, MA in December 2000, killing seven of his coworkers, survivors found comfort at St. Joseph's Catholic Church across the street.

But in April 2000, when a 16-year-old boy shot and injured seven young people at the National Zoo in Washington, DC, the faith community could document no organized response – even though local religious leaders made insightful and moving comments about what needed to happen. When a former employee opened fire at a Navistar engine manufacturing plant in a Chicago suburb in 2001, killing four people and then himself, the faith community remained publicly quiet.

This preliminary study suggests four key findings:

- 1) The primary role of local religious leaders is seen to be the gate-keeper between the news media and those traumatized. However, few religious leaders are prepared to confront the media and fewer yet have pre-existing media plans.
- 2) In locations where natural disasters occur frequently, faith-based response to incidents of public violence is more likely to occur because disaster response plans are often already established.
- 3) Pre-existing interfaith/ministerial organizations are key to organizing faith-based response. However, few local interfaith organizations have considered how to respond to local incidents of public violence.
- 4) There is a critical need to train local religious leaders how to respond to incidents of public violence.

Conceptualization of the Exploratory Study

This exploratory study relied primarily on the results of an extensive literature review, an Internet search, and interviews with emergency response professionals and local religious leaders – both those who have responded to incidents of public violence and those who have not. Interviews for this study were conducted in January and February 2002. Research was completed in May 2002.

► Preliminary Research

Although faith-based organizations have a proven track record in providing aid to survivors of disasters, they have had much less experience in aiding those touched by acts of public violence. In fact, if the local faith community has the resources, they are often the only non-emergency or non-governmental responders to an incident of public violence.

It is generally agreed that the burden for mitigating the effects of public violence falls directly on the local community. While local public agencies deal with the physical and even the psychological trauma from a major act of community violence, they are ill-equipped to respond to the spiritual needs and spiritual healing that much of the community desires.

Therefore, a greater burden falls on the local faith-based community when an incident of public violence occurs. But what is the response? It appears to vary by denomination and geographic locality. There is better preparation in those areas of the country that have a history of natural disasters such as flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc. – where there is an established network for emergency response. When a faith-based organization geographically neighbors the site of a public violence incident, an even greater burden may fall on the local religious leader – not only from the public, but from the members of his or her own organization.

How does a local religious leader respond to an incidence of violence in their own community? This report documents the initial findings from an exploratory study on faith-based response to incidents of public violence.

Defining an Incidence of Public Violence

What is the definition of an incident of public violence? Violence is the "threatened or actual use of physical force or power against another person, against oneself, or against a group or community that either results in -- has a high likelihood of resulting in -- injury, death, or deprivation" (Creating a Caring Community). When an incidence of violence in a public setting is reported in the mass media and has a pronounced effect on the community, it can be considered a public act of violence. When a public act of violence is severe enough in scope and nature, it can be considered a disaster as in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Generally, public incidents of violence are considered "crimes" in most cases and are treated by the local authorities as a criminal investigation – adding layers of bureaucracy to the immediate and sometimes longer response phase.

Background Information: Existing National Emergency Response Organizations

The Church World Service Emergency Response Program (CWS/ERP) works with and through faith-based state and community organizations that engage in disaster preparedness, mitigation, and response activities. Trained CWS representatives help disaster-stricken communities link to local and outside resources. Other faith-based disaster response organizations work with CWS/ERP both nationally and locally to offer spiritual care and practical assistance to disaster survivors.

In turn, CWS/ERP and other faith-based groups may also participate in the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) and in state or local VOADs. VOADs coordinate planning efforts by many voluntary organizations responding to disasters. Member organizations commonly meet before disasters strike. Once a disaster occurs, state VOADs encourage members and other voluntary agencies to respond.

In addition to faith-based organizations, NVOAD's 35 national members include organizations such as: the American Red Cross, Points of Light Foundation, and National Organization for Victim Assistance, a nonprofit that works on behalf of victims of crime and disaster. Members of the NVOAD and state or local VOADs are not governed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) but do work closely with FEMA by participating in FEMA-sanctioned training, working with FEMA's Voluntary Agency Liaisons, and being present in FEMA's Disaster Field Offices (DFOs).

The American Red Cross often provides emergency assistance such as mass care and feeding after a natural disaster strikes, then "hands off" people's long-term needs to faith-based and other local voluntary groups. Historically, in incidences of localized public violence, the Red Cross has not responded, but beginning with the Columbine shooting in Littleton, CO, the Red Cross began to provide varying degrees of community outreach in other similar incidents.

Literature Review

Various resources were used to search for literature on faith-based response to incidents of public violence. The Web search included:

- ◆ Several online resources including the Center for Violence at the University of Colorado in Boulder.
- ◆ The Web sites of the major faith-based disaster response organizations were reviewed (see Web addresses at the back of this report).
- ◆ An Internet search for "violence" and "emergency intervention."
- ◆ The databases of a major liberal arts academic university in the Baltimore-Washington area.
- ◆ The databases at a Baltimore-Washington Christian college that offers theology, religious studies, and a divinity major.

Overall, there is a dearth of literature that addresses the role of the local faith-based community in responding to incidents of public violence. Much of the related published literature focuses on violence from other perspectives:

- ◆ Violence prevention in youth and adults (National Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence; The National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention; Danielson).
- ◆ Domestic and sexual violence (Nason-Clark; Smith; Dixon; Hunt; Fiorenza & Copeland; Broadgus, among others).
- ◆ Programs organized by faith-based and secular groups to prevent or curb youth, gang and other generalized violence (Christian Perspective on Social Issues; Violence Prevention Project; Study Circles Resource Center).

Also reviewed were:

- ◆ Articles and books on the role of local religious leaders in reducing the psychological trauma from violence in general
- ◆ Books on critical incidence stress management (CISM)
- ◆ Literature on the role of local religious leaders in counseling in emergency response (Everly; Everly & Mitchell; Flanery, Wahking; Schoenfeldt; Johnson).
- ◆ Many articles published by the news media on various high profile incidents of public violence -- mainly dealing with the immediate response by local organizations (Adams; Copeland; Rimer; Rivera; Stammer; Simpson) were reviewed.

Note: Many of these articles described how local faith organizations opened their churches to provide sanctuary from natural and technological disasters as well as asylum from incidents of public violence. These articles also report on the spiritual care local faith communities provided through prayer services, counseling by local religious leaders to the survivors of incidents of public violence, and other activities held by local churches. Some articles focused on the reported spiritual malnutrition in the United States and the perceived need for spiritual care in response to the increasing violence in our culture (Hamblin; Malone; Spears).

On the larger faith-based emergency response Web sites, there was a good deal of information on preparing for disasters as well as policy statements and protocols to guide the clergy and lay members in responding to natural disasters (See Web-based resources list at the end of this paper). There was also information that defined the various levels of a disaster -- from a low level, localized response to a high level, major response. Many of the major faith-based emergency response organizations provide recommendations and guidelines for establishing local interfaith organizations or local ministerial associations. These networks help organize the faith community in preparing for local disaster response or in creating a successful response to any in-progress disaster.

Preventing workplace violence is another area in the public violence literature arena (Feder; Griesmann; Martindale; Silverman). Many of these resources focused on the hiring of chaplains by businesses to curb worker conflict and onsite violence.

The Disaster News Network, (www.disasternews.net) has an archive of original articles covering incidents of public violence, with many of them focusing on how faith leaders have responded and how local communities are affected (Brier, Gangler, Heller, Kim, Lewis, Moyer). This includes articles on incidents in schools, the workplace, and other public settings.

Aside from the articles published on the Disaster News Network (DNN), very little is written on the role that local religious leaders take in responding to incidents of public violence nor could researchers identify any educational materials that could help them define the issues or considerations in their response.

An Exploratory Study: Methodological Considerations

Given the lack of published literature and Internet information on local and national faith-based response to incidents of public violence, Village Life Company conducted a preliminary field study. The study relied on qualitative methodology, using exploratory interviews with faith and community leaders as well as emergency response professionals to better understand the issues and needs in faith-based response to incidents of public violence.

A series of open-ended questions were developed. One set targeted those individuals who had never been involved in responding to an incident of public violence. Another set targeted those individuals who had experience in responding to incidents of public violence.

For those who had never been involved in incidents of public violence or disaster response, interviewers asked such questions as:

- ◆ What do you think your role might be if an incident of PUBLIC VIOLENCE occurs in a nearby location? Several hypothetical situations were suggested to assist them in this exercise.
- ◆ Do you know if there are any church policies (for their particular faith organization) in place to help guide local religious leaders in their response to incidents of public violence? Do you know of any policies by any other faith-based organizations that provided guidelines?
- ◆ In your estimation, is a study on faith-based response to incidents of public violence needed, and what would you like the focus of the study to be (who, what, when, where, and how). How should the results be applied, used, or shared?

With respondents who had been involved in incidents of public violence, a slightly different set of questions was asked, based on their experiences including:

- ◆ Describe your involvement in responding to an incident(s) of public violence. How did you determine the level and extent of your involvement with the incidence of public violence?
- ◆ Were you contacted by the media and how did you response?
- ◆ Did you hold services? Describe them. How did you determine services were needed?
- ◆ How prepared were you to respond? Were there things you might do differently if you responded to another incident of public violence? What are they?

- ◆ Do you know how other area/city churches responded to the same incident? If you do, please elaborate. How was it the same or different from what you did?
- ◆ Do you know if there are any church policies (for your particular faith organization) in place to help guide clergy in their response to incidents of public violence? Do you know of any policies by any other faith-based organization that provides guidelines to local religious leaders and church leaders?

Final Interviewee Statistics and High-level Profiles

Since this was an exploratory study to help understand the underlying concepts and issues, a small number of respondents, representing a number of different perspectives were chosen. This included a range of individuals from high level professional consultants in disaster and public violence response, to high level directors of urban emergency response, to local religious leaders and others who have and have not been involved in public violence. Overall the study contacted: active local religious leaders, previous local religious leaders, local faith-based counselors, ministers, individuals active or previously involved in responding to disasters, as well as clergy and lay professionals who have responded to public violence.

As the following demographic information demonstrates, the pool of eighteen final respondents represented a diversity of backgrounds, disciplines, and experience.

- ◆ Nine individuals who have directly responded to incidents of public violence
- ◆ Nine individuals who have not responded to incidents of public violence
- ◆ Eleven ordained ministers
- ◆ Seven practicing local religious leaders and ministers
- ◆ Four local religious leaders who have responded directly to incidents of public violence
- ◆ Four practicing local religious leaders and ministers who have never responded to incidents of public violence
- ◆ Seven active, and or former, members of voluntary disaster state and national groups including the National Organization for Victims Assistance (NOVA) and the Church World Service Emergency Response Program (CWS/ERP)
- ◆ Representatives from around the nation including individuals from the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, South, Midwest, West, and West Coast; one individual who works on a national level; and one who works on both a national and international level in disaster response
- ◆ 12 males

- ◆ Six females
- ◆ One National and International Disaster Consultant.
- ◆ One Director of Emergency Preparedness for a major urban area on the West Coast who previously served as the Director of Emergency Preparedness for a major Southern urban area
- ◆ Representatives from The American Baptist Church, The United Methodist Church, Lutheran Disaster Response, the Roman Catholic Church, The Disciples of Christ, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, the First Unitarian Church, the Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ
- ◆ Four Doctors of Philosophy
- ◆ Eight members of interfaith coalitions or ministerial associations (includes one layperson)
- ◆ One individual who was involved directly in responding to a major incidence of violence in school

Summary of Responses

Those who had never been involved in responding to an incident of public violence often did not understand what constituted one. For instance, a local religious leader of a Catholic church in a small Vermont town first responded with, "What do you mean?" When prompted with examples of previous incidents of public violence, he began to understand the scope and nature of the incidents. But, he said he was very removed from the nationally reported events. When previous, high profile incidents of public violence had occurred in other areas of the country, he had not held services for his church membership nor had he been approached for counseling or prayer services. In general, he thought it was unlikely that this kind of public violence would occur in his town.

Those in urban/suburban areas, however, largely understood the potential for violence and even imagined what form it might take. For instance, two local religious leaders in the Wilkinsburg area anticipated a violent incident revolving around gang or youth violence. They were surprised when the actual incidence of public violence was neither gang nor teen related, but a shooting spree by an adult community member.

Many knew of daily domestic and street violence in their communities that had never reached the level of a high profile incident of public violence. These included:

- ◆ A local religious leader in Washington, DC; and one in Wilkinsburg
- ◆ A major West Coast emergency manager
- ◆ Another local religious leader from a small New England town who belonged to a ministerial association that had never discussed a disaster or emergency response plan

- ◆ Two local religious leaders from the Baltimore area who also had never created an emergency response plan
- ◆ A local religious leader from Colorado who started an interfaith association after a major incidence of public violence
- ◆ A mid-Atlantic judicatory executive
- ◆ A local religious leader from a rural area who also talked about a community "Network of Care" that exists where her church is located. If an incident of any kind occurs, news spreads quickly through access to an emergency radio that many people have in their homes.

Many believe that geographic location and denominational differences affect the kind of response that the faith-community makes. This included a disaster responder from California; a local religious leader in the southern United States; a certified trauma specialist working for a major faith-based disaster response organization; and two pastoral counselors from the mid-Atlantic states.

In particular, the disaster responder from California said, "The response to every situation of public violence is very situational. The church response depends on the type of public violence. Does it involve racial issues or local politics? What are the denominational issues?" "It's different for every disaster," the responder continued. "Not all churches have the same representation or support. It has a lot to do with local leaders. There is no standardized level of response."

However, a volunteer responder also from California said that the faith response on a local level is better where there are a lot of national disasters and existing interfaith associations. One of the first comments that a local faith-based counselor made who had never responded to an incident of public violence was that "it's different by different denominations."

Another difference between those who had never been involved in an incident of public violence and those that had, was how they would respond if an incident occurred. Many, but not all, of those who had never been involved said they did not know what they would do or whom they would call if an incident occurred near their church. Additionally, they did not know of any guidelines or information that would help them to respond.

This included a local religious leader in Washington, DC, a local religious leader in Vermont; and a local religious leader in an Mid-Atlantic Urban setting. In most cases they did not know if there were any policies established by their denomination, but thought that there might be some policies established through the relief arm of their national faith organization.

Those who had been involved in incidents of public violence said they thought they would know how to respond, but since each incident is different, they were not positively sure how. Those that were members of interfaith coalitions or ministerial associations usually said they would get the word out to their colleagues in those groups or meet with them to organize an immediate response.

Those who were volunteers or employed personnel in established emergency response organizations said they knew how to respond. For those who were faith-based, when asked if they knew of guidelines, protocols or policies established by their national faith organization, few thought there were information sources and protocols available for local religious leaders and faith leaders.

This contrasts sharply with the responses by the individuals who had never been involved in responding to an incident of public violence or who have had involvement in very small incidents.

Some of the individuals who had responded to incidents of public violence and to disasters felt that public violence response was similar to the emergency response for natural disasters. Others felt that it was significantly different because it is considered a crime scene. Adding an additional layer of criminal investigation also complicates the response and can delay the healing of the survivors and present additional challenges. A crime scene is subject to further investigation of the evidence, which delays the healing process and recovery of those who were traumatized.

Many interviewees who had responded to incidents of public violence, or knew others that had, felt that the role of local religious leaders should be as a gatekeeper between the media and those traumatized by the incident. They mentioned the importance of developing a media plan and a media contact before the incident occurred. This included a local religious leader in an urban mid-Atlantic area; a local religious leader in Pennsylvania; a trauma response specialist from California; A former local disaster responder and local pastoral counselor; a local religious leader in the Southeastern U.S. and a local religious leader from Pennsylvania.

According to these interviewees, the press often emphasizes certain aspects of the incident or completely leaves out significant pieces of information. It sensationalizes the story. It has often identified a local religious leader as a contact person -- driving calls to their phone without asking who the contact person should be.

By acting as a gatekeeper, faith leaders can protect the privacy of grieving family members and others traumatized by the disaster, protect other faith leaders that are involved in the response, and it help clarify the public message.

Differences in theology present an additional area of consideration. Some faiths are told to accept the trauma as God's will. Evangelical groups in the Columbine incident refused to come to the community interfaith services unless they focused on "coming to Jesus." This was described in some detail by a California responder; a local religious leader in the Southern United States and a trauma intervention specialist.

All the respondents agreed a detailed study on faith-based response to incidents of public violence could be valuable, but some of the respondents said they did not see how responding to incidents of public violence was any different than responding to incidents of natural disasters. With those that had been involved in disaster response or incidents of public violence, they thought that communities located in natural disaster prone areas of the country would be better equipped to respond to incidents of public violence. They stated that those areas have an infrastructure of faith-based and community-based emergency, regional, state or federal response teams already in place.

Some respondents had their own special interests or approach to violence. One was an advocate of non-violence and has been involved in raising public awareness of methods to prevent social violence including the presentation of events or activities that are labeled specifically as "non-violent," such as peace camps or other public forums.

Some had organized camps for youth who had been involved in incidents of public violence to help them work out psychological and spiritual trauma cause by the incident. They have established a "peer organization" to develop leadership skills in youth who could help future survivors of public violence heal. Their main emphasis was, in fact, on "victim assistance" via peer mentoring and sharing. However, the idea of hosting a camp for youth involved in previous incidents of public violence to help their peers who are traumatized by new incidents of public violence is a relatively new concept.

Many of the respondents that had been involved with disaster response or incidents of public violence stressed the importance of having interfaith or ministerial associations in place. The Director of Emergency Preparedness in a large West Coast city has promoted the formation of interfaith coalitions, believing firmly that an intact interfaith infrastructure in a potentially volatile urban environment is a critical element for effective response to incidents of public violence. The local religious leaders go on the streets to talk to people and help them diffuse their anger.

This same director is a member of many interfaith coalitions and is developing another coalition - one created for faith leaders and physicians. He believes that power and authority figures in uniform may actually incite a violent crowd to more violence. He minimizes the use of uniformed men in curbing major incidents of public violence, mainly utilizing them to protect the fire fighters, as well as protect the faith-based and other emergency responders on the streets.

Many of the respondents who have been involved in public violence or disaster response think that local faith communities are playing increasingly significant roles in spiritual care.

According to two respondents, many businesses are employing chaplains to help allay violence in the workplace. Many psychological trauma specialists acknowledge the importance of spiritual care and are including local religious leaders, counselors and faith leaders in their process.

When asking the respondents whether they thought a study on faith-based response to incidents of public violence is needed, everyone agreed that it was, although some more readily than others. There were differences in what they thought should be studied and how the results should be applied.

The interviewees had very diverse ideas or suggestions for the final product in a faith-based study. Some thought making published guidelines and directories available to local faith leaders would be helpful. Others thought that they would probably never read guidelines but enjoyed the idea of training. Others thought that assistance with developing a public violence or disaster plan tailored to their church or community would be valuable. For those who did not have one in place already, some admitted they had been thinking about developing a disaster plan since September 11 -- but had not thought about developing a response plan focused on incidents of public violence.

Tangible Deliverables

Most of those interviewed said they wanted a study to have practical and applied results. While they were interested in the findings of the study, they wanted to see tangible deliverables such as:

- ◆ An article that explains how previous faith leaders have responded to incidents of public violence and identifies best practices
- ◆ Descriptions of how different faiths respond differently to incidents of public violence
- ◆ A list of the faith players and their influence in different areas of the United States
- ◆ Educational programs to help faith leaders and members understand the role of the faith community in responding to incidents of public violence.
- ◆ An explanation of the networks that exist for emergency response in this country and how they can be used in responding to incidents of public violence
- ◆ Guidelines on how a town can set up an emergency response plan to deal with disaster and incidents of public violence and how a church can set up its own individual plan.
- ◆ Not just written guidelines -- some respondents said the every day local religious leader would not read them -- but training programs or workshops to give local religious leaders in-person information on how to respond to an incident of public violence or a disaster.
- ◆ A short booklet on how individual churches can set up a disaster plan that can also include a component on responding to incidents of public violence.
- ◆ A list of ways to involve the congregation or membership more actively in violence prevention and response.
- ◆ Portable workshops and training programs to help local faith leaders develop a comprehensive response to disasters and incidents of public violence.
- ◆ More programs in the local community to help prevent violence from erupting, such as conflict resolution or promoting non-violence awareness, local religious counseling, healthy activities for youth, food programs, work programs, etc.
- ◆ Programs to help young people who have survived incidents of school or public violence heal from the psychological and spiritual trauma.
- ◆ Courses at seminaries to help students understand the role that the local faith community plays in public violence.

- ◆ A description of how local religious leaders can assist in helping meet the spiritual needs of those affected.
- ◆ Ideas on how faith leaders can support those involved in incidents of public violence (and/or disasters) when they are not members of a congregation and are not in contact with the faith community.

Those who have been involved in responding to incidents of public violence want to have a vehicle to share their experiences. Often the local religious leader's story about his/her involvement in an incident of public violence never reaches the people because the media filters out information. One local religious leader mentioned that even the newsletter published for his/her national faith organization did not publish a story on the faith response to an incidence of public violence.

Summary

It is clear from the preliminary study that more research is needed to understand the best practices for faith-based response to incidents of public violence. When an incident of public violence is not large enough to be labeled as a disaster by state, regional or federal municipalities, a larger burden is placed on the local community to handle the incident.

Yet there are no standardized protocols. It is clear that more information is needed to understand what the role of the local faith leaders should be in response to incidents of public violence and how they are similar or different from natural and technological disasters.

The National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention (NFCVP) in Washington, DC has taken a major role in supporting research on violence prevention. NFCVP is a partnership between public and private funders, experts in violence prevention, other disciplines, and community collaborations (www.nfcvp.org). It was founded in 1994 to address violence and its related problems in a coordinated way and to nurture a national violence prevention movement through advocacy, action, public awareness and a focus on prevention. One of NFCVP's stated research efforts is to better understand how to "engage" the faith community in violence prevention programs.

While there are numerous faith-related efforts to prevent incidents of public violence, there is little understanding of the role of faith based organizations when incidents of public violence occur. Based upon this preliminary study, there is a great need to understand and share the best practices of local faith-based response to incidents of public violence.

A comprehensive research study could shed light on the issues involved in public violence and could provide the "best practices" in faith based response. This would be especially helpful to local faith communities who have little information on responding to incidents of public violence.

Such advanced research could seek to understand the following:

- ◆ The current resources and emergency programs in the United States and how they may support local faith response to incidents of public violence.

- ◆ The policies and guidelines that may be available or those that need to be established.
- ◆ When an incident of public violence occurs, how the local religious leader effectively respond to the needs of the survivors, the affected organization, and the larger community.

Such a study could also seek to understand the local religious leader's public and internal roles for coping with incidents of public violence. In addition, it could explore the role disaster organizations play in supporting local religious leaders and congregations that are immediately involved in a public violence crisis as well as to the survivors in general. Finally, it could explore the role that non-local congregations and communities may have when an incidence of public violence occurs. It could help individuals in faith-based congregations from other American cities outside the effected area find ways to help. And it could explore how faith-based and public groups can work together to mitigate the effects of public violence.

► References

- Adams, P. (2001). "Columbine victim's story one of faith Gwinnett church hears parents of slain Colorado teen tell of her inner turmoil and tragic death." *Atlanta Constitution*, April 23.
- Brier, H. (2001). "Community Responds to Shootings." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=1078. April 25.
- Broadus, L. "Sex and violence in the family and church." *Lexington-Theological Quarterly*, 26, 13-23.
- Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence. (2001). *Information House* (Database) www.Colorado.edu/CSPUBLIC VIOLENCE.
- Copeland, L. (1999). "People's faith is tested through this." *USA Today*, April.
- Danielson, K. (2000). "Students gather for peace, prevention and healing at the Summit of Schools". *The Presbyterian Sun*, 7(2), April/May.
- Dixon, C. K. (1997). "Clergy as Carers: A Response to the Local religious leaderal Concern of Violence in the Family." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 15, 126-131.
- Everly, G., Jr. (2000). "The Role of Local religious leaderal Crises Intervention in Disasters, Terrorism, and Other Community Crises." *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health*, 2(3), 139-142.
- Everly, G. Jr., Mitchell, J. T. (1999). *Critical Incident Stress Management: A New Era and Standard of Care in Crisis Intervention*. Ellicott City, Maryland: Chevron Publishing Corporation.
- Feder, B. J. (1996). "Many Companies Hire Chaplains as Counselors." *New York Times*: October 23.
- Flannery, R., Jr. (1995). *Violence in the Workplace*. Ellicott City, Maryland: Chevron Publishing Corporation.
- Flannery, R., Jr. (1998). *The Assaulted Staff Action Program: Coping with the Psychological Aftermath of Violence*. Ellicott City, MD: Chevron Publishing Corporation.
- Gangler, D. R. (2000). "Churches open after shooting." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=384. April 19.
- Griesmann, D.A. (2001). *Nonprofits and Violence Workplace*. (revised) www.nlada.org/DMS/Documents/1004551216.23/. October 26.
- Hamblin, K. (1999). "Put God back in our lives." *Denver Post*, April 25.

- Heller, P.J. (2001). "Kids try to cope after shooting." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/publicviolence/3-7-01_ca-kidscope.php. March 7.
- Heller, P.J. (2000). "Zoo shooting symptom of crises say faith leaders." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=384. April 25.
- Johnson, K. (1998). *Trauma in The Lives of Children: Crisis and Stress Management Techniques for Counselors, Teachers, and Other Professionals*, Ellicott City, MD: Chevron Publishing Corporation.
- Kim, S. (2002). "What's a Disaster?" *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=1361. March 17.
- Kim, S. (2000). "Community ponders long-term healing." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=388. March 17.
- Kim, S. (2000). "Wilkinsburg reconciles after violence." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=387. March 23.
- Kim, S. (2000). "Churches respond quickly to shooting survivors." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=389. March 1.
- Lewis, J. (2000). "Communities cope with rising violence." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=386. March 28.
- Lewis, J. (2000). "Counsel offered amid violence." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news.php?articleid=982. March 7.
- Malone, J. (2001). "Backgrounder: 9/11 Charities - Counseling: Need for spiritual care won't end soon." *Atlanta Journal the Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 28.
- Moyer, H. (2001). "Violence more likely at semester start." *Disaster News Network*, www.disasternews.net/news/news..php?articleid=1234. August 21.
- National Funding Collaborative On Violence Prevention. (2002). *Engaging the Faith Community in Violence Prevention: A Tipsheet for Practitioners*. www.nfcvp.org/res_pub.html.
- Nason-Clark, N. (1999). "Shattered Silence or Holy Hush? Emerging Definitions of Violence Against Women in Sacred and Secular Contexts." *Family-Ministry*, Sp, 39-56.
- Public Education Campaign. *Resources for Youth: California's Violence Prevention*, 454 Las Galinas Ave., Suite 178, San Rafael, CA 94903, (415) 331-5991.
- Rimer, S. (1999). "Columbine Students Seek Answers in Their Faith." *New York Times*, June 6.

- Rivera, J. (2001). "Local religious leaders lead prayers for beleaguered city. Appeals: Religious and political leaders begin a weekend of spiritual activities aimed at reducing violence in Baltimore." *The Baltimore Sun*, November 17.
- Rodriguez, N. C. (1999). "Churches step in to stop youth violence." *Eagle-Tribune*, September 14.
- Rosado, C. (1994). "America the brutal." *Christianity Today*, 38(9), August 15.
- Schoenfeldt, M. (1993). *School Crisis Response Teams: Lessening the Aftermath*. Ellicott City, MD: Chevron Publishing Corporation.
- Spears, L. (1999). "Facing our Spiritual Malnutrition." *Afro-American*, May 29.
- Martindale, M. (2001). "Oakland U. holds meetings about workplace violence; About 1,000 workers each year are killed across the country." *Detroit News*, Sept. 21.
- Silverman, R. E. (2001). "More Chaplains Take Ministering Into Workplace." *Wall Street Journal*, November 27.
- Simpson, K. (1999). "Daughter's death brings life 'into focus' Rachel Scott's dad delivers message of faith across US." *Denver Post*, October 20.
- Stammer, L. B. (1999). "Religion: Exploring issues, answers and beliefs: Age-Old Query: Where Was God? Southland religious leaders say the answer in times of tragedy, such as the Colorado high school shootings, is rather; 'Where are God's people?'" *Los Angeles Times*, April 24.
- Smith, R. (1998). "The Boundary Wars Mystery." *Religious Studies Review*, 24, April.
- Staff Writer. (1999). "For many Littleton teens, a time of spiritual searching In this dazed Denver suburb, students flock to churches for counsel." *Christian Science Monitor*, May 10.
- Study Circles Resource Center. *Youth Issues Youth Voices: A guide for Engaging Youth and Adults in Public Dialogue and Problem Solving*. P.O. Box 203, Pomfret, Connecticut 06258 (860-928-2616).
Violence. "Christian Perspective on Social Issues", Volume Three. Nashville, TN: Cokesbury.
- Wahking, H. (Ed). *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 16. 99-16.

► Addendum: Wilkinsburg Shooting: A Case Study June 30, 2000

On March 1, 2000, a man shot and killed three people and wounded two others in the community of Wilkinsburg, a suburb of Pittsburgh. Ronald Taylor, the man charged in the shooting, allegedly set fire to his apartment, shot a maintenance worker, then shot people at two fast-food restaurants, and took hostages in a nearby office building before surrendering to police. Local churches initiated a response to this incident immediately after the first shooting. The following case study presents text and photos that document this response. Information was culled from two visits to Wilkinsburg and phone interviews.

Wilkinsburg Shooting • March 1, 2000

The following photos were taken on a visit to Wilkinsburg in May 2000, about two months after the shooting.



Taylor fired shots in this Burger King in the heart of Wilkinsburg, as well as at a McDonald's across the street.



Taylor held hostages at this senior residential center (in photos above and below), where police arrested him. Taylor allegedly first set fire to his apartment, shot a maintenance worker, then shot two people at fast food restaurants before ending his rampage in the senior citizen's center.



Taylor's apartment, the fast food restaurants, and this complex are located less than one mile from each other.

About the Wilkinsburg Ministerial Alliance

The Wilkinsburg Ministerial Association is currently chaired by the Rev. Michael Golphin, pastor at Deliverance Baptist Church. The Ministerial Association was founded in 1992 by then Mayor Bob Pitts, who formed it with the goal of pulling African-American and white clergy together. Until that time, the Ministerial Association was predominantly white and very small. Described as "an intentional building of friendship" among pastors, the Ministerial Association at its start was focused on curbing youth violence related to gangs. They began planning ecumenical activities that focused on bringing community members and youth together. Now they conduct many coordinated programs and meet regularly as well.



Immediate Response at the Covenant Church of Pittsburgh

The Covenant Church of Pittsburgh is located less than one block away from where most of the shooting occurred. After running down the street for assistance, employees of the fast food restaurants and their families gathered here. Local pastors, receiving notice through an established telephone tree, met at the church with survivors to offer moral support and pastoral counseling. At first, at least six restaurant employees, their families, and other community members met at the church.

Through an already-organized phone tree, the Hospitality Committee of the church was contacted and arrived at the scene to provide snacks and beverages. At least one pastor remained constantly in prayer with affected families. Other pastors visited local hospitals where wounded people were sent.



Immediate Response By Pastors on the Streets

When Taylor walked the mile from his apartment, to the two fast food restaurants, and finally to the senior center, he left many frightened people in each establishment. People from each place filtered out into the streets to call for help, talk with their neighbors, or simply seek solace in company.

Pastors such as the Rev. Diane Shepard, of St. Stephens Episcopal Church, offered pastoral counseling on the streets. St. Stephens is located less than one block from the senior citizens center where Taylor surrendered to police. Within the same building as the senior center is also a medical center, and one doctor was among the people taken hostage. Other doctors ran out of the building, upset because when they left Taylor was allegedly holding a gun to one doctor's head. The doctor was later released unharmed. Shepard and others were out on the street most of the afternoon of the shooting, comforting people, offering assistance, and directing people to nearby Covenant Church, where others were gathered.



Local pastors reported they were able to conduct a more effective, on-the-spot street ministry because they had experience in street ministry-type activities. Youth ministry, cultural programs, community worship services were among activities churches held in conjunction with each other after finding that their community was searching for a more "hands-on" ministry. But response to the shootings, for most Wilkinsburg pastors, was their first disaster response. Some individuals had given comfort to families after a fire destroyed a number of homes. Several pastors reported that responding to this shooting made them realize there was a role for pastors and churches to play in or near a violence or disaster scene immediately after it happens.

Wilkinsburg churches have provided most of the support to survivors of this violent disaster. The local chapter of the American Red Cross was not involved in any kind of response to the shooting. A spokesman for the local chapter said the shooting was "a police matter," and therefore they didn't respond.

Unfortunately, the shooting, although it had the most fatalities of any public shooting in the town in recent history, was not an isolated incident. Pastors reported that shootings - many gang or drug-related -- are common on the streets of Wilkinsburg, particularly during the nights or week-ends. Many of the programs churches were coordinating were already geared toward building community solidarity and curbing public violence. Youth ministry is a particular interest of Wilkinsburg churches. Pastors reported that, during the past several years, the streets have gotten less violent, and people are more willing to attend night worship services or activities than before. Many expressed the hope that the latest incident of violence would not frighten people back into their homes.

Longer-term Response

Longer-term response activities are ongoing. Two major activities planned after the shooting included:

- ◆ Community Prayer Walk, about one week after the shooting. Attendance was about 400, and pastors walked with Wilkinsburg residents past the sites of the shooting. Clergy - even those that normally don't wear clerical collars -- reported they purposely wore their collars so that people could easily recognize them.
- ◆ Wilkinsburg Family Talks, about two weeks after the shooting. These were held at the South Avenue United Methodist Church, where pastors and professional counselors from the Center for Victims of Violent Crime offered family counseling.
- ◆ Service of Reconciliation, about three weeks after the shooting. This ecumenical service was held at Deliverance Baptist Church.
- ◆ Million Mom March, held in Washington, DC in May. Some Wilkinsburg clergy and residents attended this event, which advocated for stronger gun control laws.

Challenges to Response

Police reported survivors heard the alleged gunman say he would harm only white people. Local pastors expressed concern that this aspect of the incident would strain race relations - which they reported have vastly improved over the last several years. Within worship services, community dialogue, and one-on-one conversation, local pastors decided to send the specific message that this was an isolated incident and not an indicator of collective anger between races. Clergy were already meeting before the shooting to discuss issues of diversity and will continue to do so. In May they participated in a community-wide workshop on reconciliation. They report local clergy, feel that racism is still something they need to deal with as a group, though they have been working on this issue for eight years together. Since the shooting, they said they have renewed their commitment to open dialog.

Another challenge reported by pastors was dealing with the media after the shooting. They reported that they first found themselves taking the role of shielding families and wounded people from the media, then taking the role of serving as community spokespeople. They reported that training in this area would have been - and possibly would still be - very valuable.

Future Response

The Wilkinsburg Ministerial Association has set a goal of continuing its response to the shooting by continuing to focus on youth violence, on-the-street ministry, and community reconciliation programs. While expressing deep sorrow that this tragic shooting occurred, they also expressed belief that the programs they had in place before the shooting are effectively curbing violent crime. Indeed, the statistics about violent crime in Wilkinsburg back up this claim. Like the rest of the U.S., Wilkinsburg has had a drop in violent crime.

The area in which clergy and local congregations would like to change is their ability to communicate quickly with each other following a violent incident or other disaster. The Ministerial Association is considering an emergency pager which would be worn by a pastor at all times. Each pastor would take a turn at being "on call."

The Ministerial Association has also expressed interest in receiving formal training in disaster response, including response to public violence as well as natural disasters. After responding to the shooting, many pastors reported that they are re-energized with the feeling that "the more hours that church doors can be open, the better."

Acknowledgements

The following Wilkinsburg pastors and/or community leaders participated in interviews that led to this case study:

Michael Golphin, Deliverance Baptist Church
Iris Goshay, pastor, Covenant Church of Pittsburgh
Janet Hellner-Burris, Christian Church of Wilkinsburg
Vivian Lovingood, director, Wilkinsburg Community Ministry
James Mead, Office of the Presbytery in Pittsburgh
Bob Menges, pastor, Covenant Church of Pittsburgh

► Internet Web Sites

Adventist Community Service, www.adventist.commuityservices.org

American Baptist Churches USA, www.abc-usa.org

Catholic Charities USA, www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/disaster

Christian Church (Disciples Of Christ), www.weekofcompassion.org

Christian Disaster Response www.cdresponse.org

Christian Reformed World Relief Committee www.crwrc.org

Church of the Brethern www.brethren.org/genbd/ersm/disaster.htm

Church World Service Emergency Response Program www.cwserp.org

Lutheran Disaster Response www.ldr.org

Mennonite Disaster Service, www.menno-disaster-service.org/

Moravian Church, www.moravian.org

Nazarene Compassionate Ministry www.nazarene.org/wm/call.html

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance www.pcusa.org/pcusa/wmd/pda/index.html

Reformed Church in America www.rca.org/mission/rcws/

Southern Baptist Convention www.namb.net

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints www.lds.org

Episcopal Relief and Development www.er-d.org

The Salvation Army www.salvationarmy.org

United Church of Christ/Wider Church Ministries www.ucc.org/globaldisaster

The United Methodist Committee on Relief <http://gbgm-umc.org/units/umcor>

National Organization for Victim's Assistance www.try-nova.org