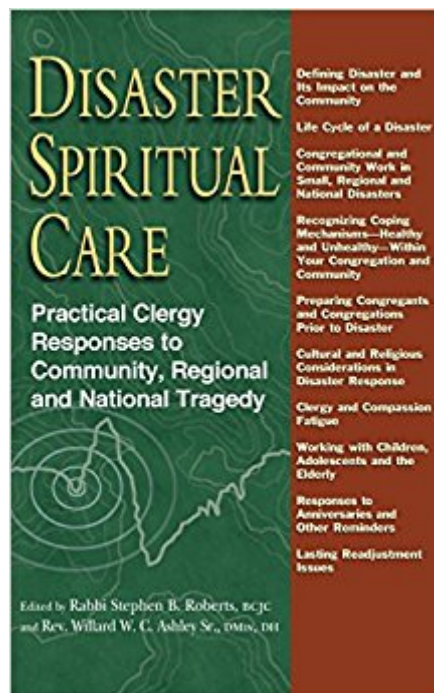




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# Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses To Community, Regional And National Tragedy



## Synopsis

The first comprehensive resource for pastoral care in the face of disaster – a vital resource for clergy, seminarians, pastoral counselors and caregivers of all faith traditions. This essential resource for clergy and caregivers integrates the classic foundations of pastoral care with the unique challenges of disaster response on community, regional and national levels. Offering the latest theological perspectives and tools, along with basic theory and skills from the best disaster response texts, research and concepts, the contributors to this resource are innovators in their fields and represent Christianity, Judaism, Islam and more. Exploring how spiritual care changes following a disaster, and including a comprehensive explanation of a disaster's lifecycle, this is the definitive guidebook for counseling not only the victims of disaster but also the clergy and caregivers who are called to service in the wake of crisis.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 384 pages

Publisher: SkyLight Paths (March 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 159473240X

ISBN-13: 978-1594732409

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.2 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 16 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #514,268 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #247 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Living > Counseling](#) #365 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Counseling](#) #483 in [Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Emergency](#)

## Customer Reviews

This is certainly an essential reference for anyone involved or interested in emergency response and recovery. – This is the first time I have found such a comprehensive and so well systematised compilation. – Insights Magazine (February 2009) The breadth of issues attending to means that there is something for everyone amidst the abundance of information and suggestions regarding Disaster Spiritual Care. – Reflective Practice: Formation & Supervision in Ministry (May 2008) This book draws on a wealth of experience and provides a compendium of realistic scenarios...and of corresponding resources and personal and professional gifts and skills

needed..in meeting the needs. --Catholic Library World (September 2008) This collection of articles provides guidance and information to clergy, preparing them to respond to natural as well as human-made disasters that might confront them. --Jewish Book World (Winter 2008) "Timely, compelling and valuable." Provides congregational clergy and pastoral care professionals with the skill and wisdom needed to sustain and support their communities when disaster strikes."

— Rabbi Dayle A. Friedman, editor, *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional and Contemporary Sources* "Draws on a wealth of experience" presents a compassionate, comprehensive mandate to prepare for spiritual care after a disaster and an abundance of wisdom for our response to ordinary crises."

— Rev. Herbert Anderson, PhD, coauthor, *All Our Losses, All Our Griefs: Resources of Pastoral Care* "A priceless compendium of realistic scenarios and needs, and of corresponding resources and personal and professional gifts or skills that can guide our preparations to serve most effectively."

— Rev. Thomas G. Landry, III, former executive director, National Association of Catholic Chaplains ABCNJ is happy to announce that one of our pastors, Rev. Dr. W. C. Ashley Sr., has coedited an important new book on ministering to people who have experienced disasters, such as 9/11 and Katrina. *Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy*, is edited by Rev William W. C. Ashley Sr., DMin, DH, and Rabbi Stephen B. Roberts, BCJC. It is published by SkyLight Paths Publishing. It will be available in March and you can read more about it by going to the book's link on [www.skylightpaths.com](http://www.skylightpaths.com). This first-of-its-kind, innovative, practical resource integrates the classic foundations of pastoral care with the unique challenges of disaster response on community, regional and national levels. This vital reference draws from the wisdom and experience of contributors from many faith traditions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and more. It is the definitive handbook for counseling not only the victims of disaster but also the clergy and caregivers who are called to service in the wake of crisis. Exploring how spiritual care changes following a disaster, and including a comprehensive explanation of a disaster's lifecycle, this handbook offers the latest professional perspectives and tools, along with basic theory and skills from the best disaster response texts, research and concepts. W. C. Ashley Sr., DMin, DH, is former staff psychotherapist at the Riverside Church, New York City, and founder and senior pastor of the Abundant Joy Community Church in Jersey City. He was the project director for Care for the Caregivers Project, created to assist caregivers in the 9/11 tragedy in New York. (American Baptist Churches of New Jersey 2008-01-27)

Edited by the Rev. Willard W. C. Ashley Sr., DMin, DH, and Rabbi Stephen B. Roberts, BCJC, *Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy* was written for religious leaders from all faiths who are

involved with disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Contributors from a wide range of faith traditions offer their perspectives and insight about their experiences working with disasters. They address topics that are relevant to congregations and faith-based organizations, including understanding the impact of disasters on communities, being aware of coping mechanisms and recognizing compassion fatigue in caregivers. By integrating information about the physical aspects of disaster response with the spiritual and psychological aspects of people's reactions, this book is a valuable and comprehensive resource for faith communities. It is published by SkyLight Paths Publishing and will be available in March at [www.skylightpaths.com](http://www.skylightpaths.com). (New York Disaster Interfaith Services 2008-02-06)

It's bad out there in religion publishing. Sales are dropping; jobs are evaporating. That's the downside of the story, and it's familiar. But what about the upside? What works in this category right now? How are religion publishers changing their sales and marketing strategies to adapt to the current economy and successfully get books out of the gate? Some are having success with new strategies. Making Face Time in Nontraditional Marketplaces At Jewish Lights, publisher Stuart Matlins says that the dwindling number of bookstores has led the Vermont-based company to seek new ways to get books some face time. "We are trying to overcome the absence of books on the shelf for people to see by getting out to more consumer and user events so they know the books exist and can go to bookstores to order them," Matlins says. That took Jewish Lights and its interfaith imprint SkyLight Paths to a Florida conference for chaplains and, for the first time, to the Unitarian-Universalist convention in Salt Lake City last month. "We are reaching out more directly to the consumers to build awareness," Matlins says. After the chaplaincy conference, SkyLight Paths saw an uptick in orders for *Disaster Spiritual Care* by Stephen B. Roberts and Willard W. C. Ashley (2008) and *Caresharing* by Marty Richards (2008). The company is also looking for more nontraditional book outlets and new marketplaces for their books. For example, for the August release of *Beading: The Creative Spirit* by Wendy Ellsworth, sales reps made cold calls to bead stores; for *The Art of War: Spirituality for Conflict* by Sun Tzu and Thomas Huynh (2008), they got the book a slot in the History Channel's online store. And for *Recovery: The Sacred Art* by Rami Shapiro (Feb.) sales reps marketed directly to recovery centers. Jewish Lights is also encouraging authors to take a more active role in marketing their own books. Every author is asked to establish a blog based on their book's subject, to create their own Facebook pages and to Twitter about the book. If they have a built-in audience or a network of readers or other consumers, they are asked to exploit that to the fullest. Matlins says *The Modern Men's Torah Commentary* (Mar.) is off to a strong start largely because its editor, Jeffrey Salkin, took the initiative in organizing his own speaking tour among synagogues and Jewish centers.

“We are focusing more on training our authors to support their own work,” Matlins says. “Part of it is encouraging them to do the tried and true but unsexy stuff, like remember to include their new books in their bios or Web sites,” he says. “You can’t buy something if you don’t know it exists.” (Kimberly Winston Publisher’s Weekly 2009-07-27)

Oklahoma City, Andrew, Katrina, Columbine, 9/11, Valdez, and the Tsunami are names of recent tragedies that have heightened our awareness of disaster. Disasters are as old as war, pestilence and natural catastrophes. Human made disasters or inadequate response to natural disasters have intensified the suffering and made them more difficult to respond to in our time. The editors of this book have amassed a comprehensive collection of essays that address a wide range of issues they believe must be anticipated and prepared for before a disaster occurs. Such preparedness is both individual and systemic. Individuals need to have a “go bag” near your bed that you can take if you need to evacuate and go. Every religious congregation needs a disaster response plan. This preparedness has been proven to be necessary because the majority of people affected by a disaster realize at some point that they “do not have the strength, faith, and ability to cope.” Like any collection of essays, there is repetition and some unevenness of quality. However, the breadth of issues attended to means that there is something for everyone amidst the abundance of information and suggestions regarding Disaster Spiritual Care. Numerous full-page boxes summarize information about the response to disaster and the need for care that we need to know. They could also become a handout for a congregational discussion about the need for preparedness. Interspersed throughout the book, I found wisdom that has application beyond preparing for a disaster. “Before you show how much you know, show how much you love” is wisdom for ministries of care wherever they occur. “Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be broken” is a truth that certainly applies every human crisis as well as to disaster spiritual care. Because of the diversity of the contexts in which we live and in which disasters may occur, we need to “demonstrate culturally competent hospitality.” After we decide as individuals and as congregations and communities what we can do, we must decide what we will do. “Stay where people can find you” certainly encourages restraint of our impulse to rush to the scene of any kind of crisis. Finally, the most compelling statement for me was this: “The willingness to be wounded may be all we have to offer.” Compassion that converts empathy into transformative healing begins with the willingness to be affected by stories we hear and the suffering we see. The appearance of a book preparing for disaster is a reminder that there is a persistent level of fear in the culture. While there is ample reference to the importance of self-care for caregivers responding to a disaster, there is inadequate exploration of the

implications of this mandate for disaster preparedness. The presumption that there will be a disaster for which we must be prepared creates a low level of anxiety or fear in the society. More discussion of the emotional consequences of this emphasis on disaster preparedness would have been beneficial. Not everyone can anticipate disaster in a comprehensive way and not be trapped in fear. The focus on fear in this volume of Reflective Practice is an invitation to consider to abuse of fear. Even if you don't mobilize your family or congregation or community to the level of disaster preparedness mandated by this volume, it is an important resource for ministry with people crises. One of the side-benefits of mobilizing a community or town to a common plan for disaster response is that people will be talking across religious and cultures differences. In that sense, preparedness may also be prevention (Reflective Practice: Formation & Supervision in Ministry 2008-05-01)

Responding to disasters is the next great need. Rabbi Stephen Roberts and Rev. Willard W. C. Ashley just edited an important volume entitled Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy. This is an important desk reference for all rabbis working in pulpits or schools or college campuses. Many of us have acquired pastoral skills in response to personal emergencies like a congregant's divorce or suicide. We have studied materials on grief counseling. We respond emphatically when we make a shivah visit. The next level is the pastoral response to a community tragedy and what is the appropriate pastoral response. Disaster Spiritual Care will answer our new questions and help us respond appropriately and wisely to community tragedy. In the opening chapter, Roberts sets up a helpful context. Every disaster has a predictable life cycle. Every disaster goes thru six stages: threat, impact, heroic, disillusionment, recovery and then the coming to terms stage. In the heroic state, victims see the miracles around them. Strangers step in to save lives. But there is also the disillusionment phase when people realize the newspapers and TV reporters have moved on, the insurance coverage may be inadequate and dreams of quickly rebuilding will be delayed. The research shows that no matter how much adequate help arrives and no matter how much good work is done, the victims will feel disillusionment, anger and grief. The relief agencies and volunteers always move on too soon. Roberts teaches us that this is the point when rabbis have an essential healing role. Rev. Julie Taylor who teaches the RA seminar on the Pastoral Response to Catastrophe wrote on "Spiritual First Aid." When we arrive at the disaster scene what should we do? Taylor instructs us in first steps – 1) Stabilize, 2) Assess, 3) Provide care and comfort, and 4) Refer as necessary. 1) Stabilization is the action you provide when you are a calming presence and create a caring human connection. The wise rabbi may just stand by a person's side and not say anything until addressed. 2) The next step is acknowledgement which involves attentive and active listening to a person in

crisis. Here is where the rabbi uses a reflective process to signal recognition of the person's experience. 3) The next step is to facilitate understanding. The rabbi validates the experience and provides information. Here is where it is helpful to educate others about normal stress reactions. It is often calming to give information as a pamphlet or handout. The next step is encouraging adaptive spiritual coping which is when you promote positive coping skills and build on what works for the individual. For example, praying with a person can be a centering activity. 4) Finally, there is referral which is when you are a bridge to resources. Disasters are extremely chaotic and knowing the proper spiritual protocol will enable us to be effective and appropriate. Our colleague Mryna Matsa contributed a chapter on healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms. Matsa teaches, "Respond pastorally to spiritual questions". She points out that when victims complain "why did God let this happen to us?" when they meet a clergyperson, it probably is not a theological statement but a means to express grief, loss and anger. It is a time for pastoral presence and not theological teaching or preaching. Matsa instructs us to offer worship in the traditional place of worship because immediately after the disaster victims will find comfort in that familiar place. Rabbis can be particularly helpful in the aftermath of disaster because many people can not process their grief. Because we already have the experience in normal situations, we can go deeper and help others in their grief. This book will better prepare us to respond with effective spiritual care in difficult situations. (Rabbi Elliot Salo Schoenberg YITRO NEXUS 2008-08-26)

Rev. Willard W. C. Ashley Sr., MDiv, DMin, DH, a frequent speaker on the topics of leadership development, clergy resiliency and interfaith dialogue, is acting dean and associate professor of practical theology at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. He was the interim pastor at Union Baptist Church in Montclair, New Jersey, and is the founding pastor of Abundant Joy Community Church in Jersey City, New Jersey. He also serves as a consultant on disaster recovery and clergy self-care to congregations and Fortune 100 companies. He is author of Learning to Lead: Lessons in Leadership for People of Faith and coeditor of Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Responses to Community, Regional and National Tragedy (SkyLight Paths). Rabbi Stephen B. Roberts, MBA, MHL, BCJC, is the editor of Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care: A Practical Clergy and Chaplain's Handbook and coeditor of Disaster Spiritual Care: Practical Clergy Response to Community, Regional and National Tragedy (both SkyLight Paths). He is a past president of the National Association of Jewish Chaplains. Most recently he served as the associate executive vice president of the New York Board of Rabbis, directing their chaplaincy program, providing services in more than fifty locations throughout New York, and serving as the endorser for both New York

State's and New York City's Jewish chaplains. Prior to this he served as the director of chaplaincy of the Beth Israel Medical System (New York), overseeing chaplains and clinical pastoral education (CPE) programs at three acute care hospitals, one behavioral health hospital, and various outpatient facilities served by chaplains.

Rabbi Stephen Roberts and his fellow authors have penned an outstanding compendium of extremely practical elements which are involved in any kind of major national/natural disaster. Having spent three weeks at the World Trade Center in NYC in Sep-Oct 2001, I saw first hand the wealth of good effort by clergy of all faith groups working together, and the sadly misguided efforts of some clergy who simply did not understand the nature of a disaster as not being a time of proselytizing or evangelizing, but a time of listening, of being there, and of providing the very simplest of human needs to exhausted, emotionally drained, and spiritually challenged firefighters, police officers, EMT personnel, and a myriad of other professionals involved in the rescue and recovery. This is a MUST read for all clergy who care for all peoples of the earth.

GREAT READ!!!

This is a very good book - would have just liked to have seen more research-based studies by the authors to support recommendations and/or case examples relating to particular disaster responses worked more into each chapter.

We are purchasing another copy of this book to add to our church library! We learned about it in a disaster response class we took. It's excellent, with practical information, examples of how to reach out to your neighbor, community, or on a larger scale.....great info and training! This is a good book for the church library, and to have in your home book collection if you are at all interested in becoming involved with your community during disasters and emergencies.

Concise - relevant information that can be used in a disaster situation - regardless if natural disaster or human crises. I learned a great deal and my book is tabbed in the event I should need to put it to use.

This was a really good book for those who are responding to the needs of traumatized victims of disaster. It is so important that people be prepared, and trained specifically for disaster scenarios



and not think that they can just go into this type of situation and treat it as they would any trauma situation.

This is an excellent resource for anyone in a pastoral care capacity - or other capacity - who works with survivors of disasters. Lots of wisdom in these pages!

As stated.

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