

Churches to coordinate disaster relief

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Last year several churches loaded up their vans with food, water and clothing to take to hurricane victims in Charlotte and DeSoto counties.

"We were everywhere," said **Tom Pfaff**, chaplain of Goodwill Industries.

It was a great response, but there was one drawback. There was no coordination with the Sarasota County Emergency Operations Center, the main source of information and emergency response for the public.

"We weren't connected," Pfaff said. EOC "would get a call for an urgent need, and the faith community could have responded if we had known."

The Disaster Preparedness Committee of the Community Alliance of Sarasota County met June 29 with about 100 clergy to get them involved with efforts to be better prepared in helping people recover this hurricane season.

They discussed pre-registration of volunteer teams; local contact information and lists; plans for neighborhood points of distribution for water, ice, nonperishable foods and tarps; and registration for provision of temporary

housing for people displaced by the storm.

"We, in an organized way, can really, through the organization, respond more effectively and go to the right places at the right time," Pfaff said.

Pfaff provided a database for contacting the clergy, and recruited volunteers to make the initial phone calls.

"We know that ... ministers are more effective together rather than individually," he said.