

On Service and Preparedness: IOCC's Homefront *continued from front cover*

Recently IOCC's US Program engaged Fr. Joel Weir and Mr. Mike Claypool as Homefront Coordinators to work closely with parishes in assessing risks, identifying resources, and developing preparedness plans unique to their characteristics and potential situations. Father Joel and Mike are both longtime IOCC Frontliners with extensive field experience responding to disasters of various kinds, and each brings to their role a wealth of parish-based and emergency related knowledge.

I encourage you to consider, with the help of IOCC, your parish's readiness to respond to disasters and emergencies. Among the many ways we strive to administer the proper order of the Church, taking time to plan for unforeseen circumstances is an important way in which your parish "constructed on earth" offers glory and praise to God.

Yours in Christ,

Archdeacon Paul Zaharas



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If you wish to contribute a reflection to the next issue of Priest to Priest, please email asiegel@iocc.org



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On Service and Preparedness: IOCC's Homefront

A Reflection by Archdeacon Paul Zaharas

With the historic devastation of Hurricanes Helene and Milton fresh in my mind, I cannot help but reflect on how our churches are places of spiritual and physical refuge in an increasingly chaotic world. They are the places that we, and the faithful entrusted to our care, go for assistance and support when the storms of life swirl around us. Our churches are a reliable foundation in this temporal world where we can tangibly experience the divine. One canon hymn of the consecration service tells us, "Today the

descending of Your unapproachable glory has revealed this church, constructed here on earth, as heaven, O Christ our God." As well, one of the prayers of the service reads, "Send down the gift of Your most Holy Spirit upon us and upon this church erected for Your glory and praise."

These words help us to recognize that our parishes, both the physical structures and the people who comprise the community of believers, are a place apart which is blessed by God. As such, it is imperative that we take prudent steps to protect them from harm. Certainly, God's protection is our ultimate guard against evils of all kinds, but it is nonetheless necessary for us to also take action to ensure that our parishes are well prepared for emergencies. Moreover, it is incumbent upon God's people to extend His love in times of crisis to those around us who are in need.

Disasters and emergencies are external events that disrupt normal everyday life and by nature cause confusion. Consequently, if we have not taken time to deliberately plan what to do in turbulent scenarios, we are left adrift to be tossed about by the waves of the situation.

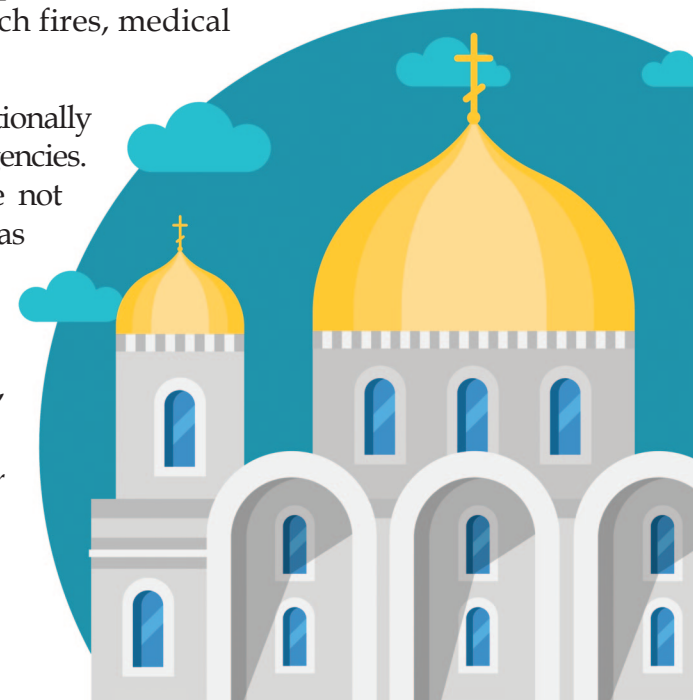
IOCC works in many parts of the world addressing different needs that are not prevalent here in our country. However, here at home we are not immune to natural and complex disasters. As much as we may try to convince ourselves that "it will never happen to us," Orthodox parishes are equally susceptible to hurricanes, floods, church fires, medical emergencies, and other perils.

Some Orthodox communities in the United States have intentionally addressed their parish's readiness for different types of emergencies. However, it is a fact that the vast majority of parishes have not sufficiently considered preparedness. For this reason, IOCC has developed HOMEFRONT, a parish preparedness program designed with two goals in mind: the continuity of parish operations in an emergency context, and critical support of the local community through the potential use of parish buildings, grounds, and resources during an emergency.

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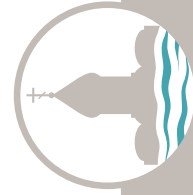
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IOCC's Homefront

Homefront parishes prepare before disaster strikes, equipping and positioning themselves to continue their ministry – even amid emergencies – and to serve their neighbors during a crisis.



A pipe bursts and floods the church hall.

What will your parish do?

What steps will you take?



Someone has a medical emergency during liturgy.

Does the service continue?

Who should act, and what will they do?



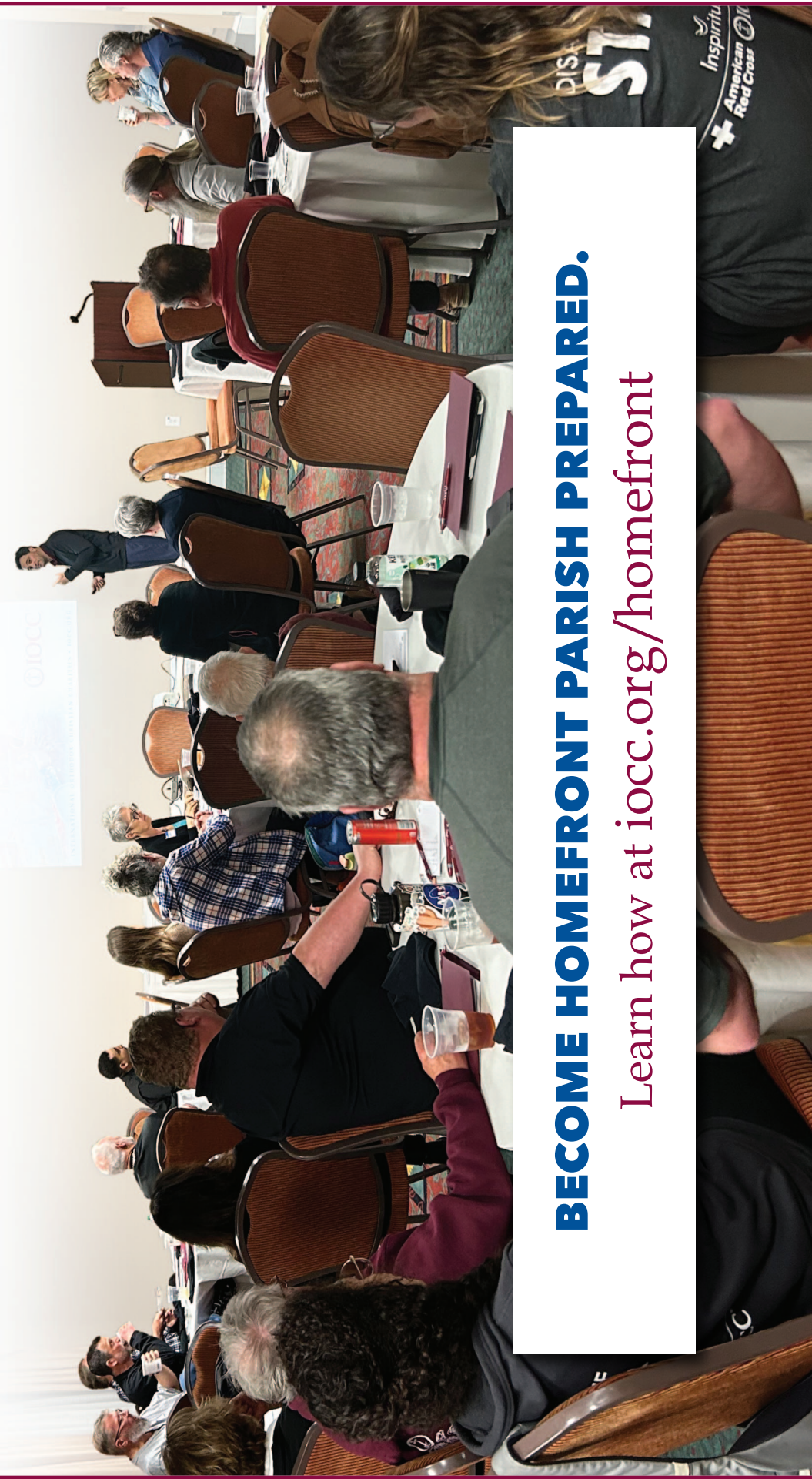
A natural disaster devastates your town.

How can your parish serve survivors?

Whom do you contact to let them know you can help?

WHY JOIN THE HOMEFRONT?

Homefront Parish Preparedness Training with IOCC equips you and your fellow parishioners to think through scenarios like these – and more – and design a preparedness plan to guide your response. You'll learn about evaluating vulnerabilities, identifying resources, and taking steps to reduce risks.



BECOME HOMEFRONT PARISH PREPARED.

Learn how at iocc.org/homefront