

Summative Case Studies



St. John's Community Church: The Eye of the Storm

St. John's Community Church has stood as a cornerstone in Bayville, a small coastal town, for over a century. With its quaint surroundings and an average Sunday congregation of 200 people, the church has been more than just a spiritual haven; it has often served as a physical shelter during the hurricane season that lashes the town every few years.

Pastor Emily Johnson has been leading St. John's for the last five years. When she first arrived, she was told by the elder board that the church had always been the de facto refuge during severe weather. She felt proud of that role but was surprised to learn that there had never been an official emergency response plan. "We've been lucky, but luck won't save lives," she thought.

With a church hall that can accommodate about 100 people, St. John's does offer some logistical advantages as a refuge. The small kitchen, stocked with a minimal amount of food and water, has sufficed so far for temporary sheltering. The church also enjoys a close, albeit informal, relationship with local emergency services like the police and fire departments.

Last year, Hurricane Oswald struck Bayville, bringing torrential rain and devastating floods. While the church could provide immediate relief to about 50 locals, the experience revealed significant gaps in their preparedness. For example, they ran out of fresh water within the first day, and there was no clear leadership structure for managing the crisis, causing confusion among volunteers.

After Oswald, Pastor Emily, and the elder board realized they needed a formal plan. However, the community's needs are growing. With climate change experts predicting more frequent and severe weather patterns, Bayville's vulnerability to natural disasters is increasing. The church now faces several critical questions:

1. How can they formalize an emergency response plan that's scalable?
2. What resources, human and material, do they need to account for?
3. What kind of partnerships should they form with local authorities and other organizations?
4. How will they train their congregation and volunteers for potential crises?

Pastor Emily is committed to action, but where should St. John's begin?