

A Qualitative Study of Philippine Churches Engaged in Disaster Ministry

...we don't have that funding yet, but we have that bayanihan spirit...

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Authors

David Boan, PhD
Hazel Rosete
Jessica Polson
Kalen Drake
Ben Andrews
Wheaton College
Wheaton, IL

Abstract

All pastors face a multitude of problems when they create a ministry to serve the community in times of natural disaster. This paper reports on a set of 11 interviews conducted during two disaster ministry conferences provided by the Humanitarian Disaster Institute (HDI) of Wheaton College and the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC). The interviews used a semi-structured protocol designed to elicit pastors' experiences with the known issues in developing a ministry as well as attempting to elicit possible new themes or issues. The interviews were transcribed for analysis by a team of four graduate students. Eight categories were identified and defined, as well as recommendations from the subjects for those who may engage in this type of ministry in the future. The categories were Mission, Lessons Learned, Ministry Challenges, Resources, Needs, Service, Target Population, and Collaboration. The three dominant issues were Lack of Resources, Corruption, and Burnout. The interviews brought out the difference between

the churches accepting government support and those that refuse such support, raising questions about the role of the church as a watchdog for corruption versus being an advocate for the government. Recommendations centered on the need for better training, more resources, and greater balance between evangelism and social gospel. The paper concludes with considerations for local action and further study.

Introduction

Disasters are known to have a disruptive impact on individuals and organizations beyond the immediate physical impact. (Cherry, et al, 2011) The impact can include a re-examination of faith and theology for individuals, and an examination of mission and ministry for churches. In response to disasters, some churches work cooperatively with relief organizations as part of the recovery effort, which introduces another source of impact and change for the church. Unique to the Philippines, the issue of disaster collaboration includes the question of whether churches should partner with the government. This is a controversial issue among church leaders that was highlighted by the controversy over the government's handling of Typhoon Yolanda (Alcantara 2014 335 – 346). Specifically, some observers raise the question as to whether working together with government leads to a community organization surrendering its ability to serve as a watchdog for corruption (Rodan & Hughes, 2012). This is again accentuated in the Philippines where the government exerts centralized control of a disaster response, defining both the disaster and framing the necessary response services (Espia & Fernandez, 2015), which may impose limitations on how a community organization may engage in the response effort. This would be of particular concern to a church wanting

freedom to respond according to the dictates of its own mission and relationship to the community (Bankoff and Hilhorst 2009, 686 - 704). It is further argued that local organizations are closer to the root causes of disaster in poverty and thus have a different view of disaster vulnerability and preparedness compared to government actors (Delfin and Gaillard 2008, 190 – 199; Gaillard 2010, 218 – 232). As community-based responses to disaster relief and disaster preparedness become increasingly important, the factors that impact the development of community initiatives, and that enhance or hamper church involvement in community resilience, take on ever greater importance (Gaillard, Pangilinan, Cadag, and Masson 2008, 383 - 395; Gaillard and LeMason 2007, 313 - 317; Allen 2006, 81 -101).

This qualitative study explored the impact of disaster ministry through the experience of 11 individual pastors. The aim was to describe the developmental changes of Filipino leaders and their churches as they engaged in disaster response and community work. The purpose was to clarify the potential risks as well as strengths when engaging in relief work so that future churches and pastors may be better equipped to anticipate and prepare for these changes.

Method:

In September of 2013, 170 pastors from across the Philippines participated in a three-day meeting focusing on disaster ministry and the church. The program was attended by local and international non-government organizations (NGOs) and some government representatives. Nine participants were selected from this group by the Philippine Evangelical Disaster Response Network (PEDRN) for interviews concerning

their disaster ministry experience. An additional two interviews were conducted nine months later with pastors not receiving financial aid from the government in order to balance the group between those working with the government and those not working with the government. The semi-structured interviews examined the changes and processes of these leaders in starting and sustaining their grassroots organizations in the context of disaster ministry. A project team of four graduate students transcribed the audio-recorded interviews and analyzed the interviews using analytic software (NVivo 10). A set of a priori themes were defined before the analysis started, then the project team split into two groups of two, with each group assigned general themes (e.g., mission statements, collaboration) to identify in the interviews. Members of each group read each interview, assigning excerpts from the interviews to different theme categories. Throughout the coding process, team members met with their group partner to review the assignment of the interview excerpts to the categories, and to reconcile differences and revise category definitions. Upon completing this first phase of coding, team members met to review the interview excerpts in each category, with some categories being split into subcategories (e.g., collaboration with government, collaboration with NGOs).

Results

Overall, eight major categories were identified from the interviews as well as recommendations offered by the subjects. The categories and descriptions were as follows:

1. Mission

Mission was reflected in discussions of changes in the purpose and objectives of the organizations and/or churches, including whom they are serving and how. The majority of the participants stated that their primary purpose was to share the gospel and empower the local church. This did not appear to change over time, but the means of accomplishing this goal (or “secondary mission”) evolved out of experience. The secondary purpose, which may also be thought of as the means by which they achieved the primary purpose, focused on services such as feeding the hungry, reaching out to the marginalized and “poorest of the poor,” as well as disaster response and rescue work. There was usually a biblical foundation for the work expressed through community development, discipleship, and evangelism, as in being “... a catalyst of transformation in the community” and as aiming to “...empower local churches to be agents of social transformation... [and to] make a positive impact in communities.” Many pastors emphasized that the church must respond to physical needs as well as spiritual ones. Engaging in disaster ministry appeared to increase the awareness of the importance of meeting physical needs, resulting in a continuing effort to balance these two foci. Many pastors prioritized providing educational opportunities and resources in the community and to the local church. Pastors who worked with the government saw this (working with government) as part of their mission, as in to “...have a constructive engagement with the government for the church.” Some also engaged in specific projects that were a government priority, such as training on values. Beyond those specific government funded training programs we did not see that collaborating with the government created differences in the type of services provided. The major difference seemed to be in their rationale, in which the mission included representing government (or not).

2. Lessons Learned

Lessons learned refers to a new understanding or gained insight that resulted from running disaster ministry programs and that became influential in the development of their approach to ministry. This theme included what was learned by overcoming a barrier, a type of change from original methods, and anything new that was discovered from before. The lessons were spiritual, personal, and ministry-related. One of the crucial lessons learned in the area of spirituality was the importance of relying on God. For example, one pastor stated, "I've learned that God is inexhaustible. I've learned that no man can exhaust God's love, God's grace, and God's provision. It's always there. I've learned that the main - the crucial point of the gospel is not just saying it, but living it."

On a personal level, several participants discussed learning through their work that they often needed additional training to supplement and improve their skill set, whether in Bible and theology, or in other areas related to their particular ministries such as social work. The key message in this lesson was that traditional education for pastors is often not sufficient preparation for this type of ministry. Many participants also discussed learning that adjusting to the needs of the people and working in the community was essential. One of the primary lessons learned in the area of ministry included learning better communication and collaboration with church members, NGO staff, other organizations, or the government. In fact, many stated that a major lesson was learning to coordinate with other organizations, specifically the government, as vital to sustain their work and ministry. This was in contrast to the concept of each church having its own ministry and working independently. One pastor poignantly stated, "...you don't work alone. You have people to teach, leaders to train. So that will make life easier for you. And the ministry is

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big.” Particularly in the absence of financial resources, utilizing other organizations and individual talents, as well as being intentional about raising up church members for leadership, was discovered to be a crucial aspect of their ministry and work.

3. Challenges/Barriers:

This theme refers to discovering obstacles that impeded organizational development and effectiveness (i.e. lack of cooperation, competition, government interference, burn out, lacking skills, etc.), including challenges that came about for each leader and their staff while serving their community and running their prospective ministries and organizations. These challenges included personal, theological, leadership, contextual, organizational, and collaborative challenges. Participants discussed personal challenges such as feeling burnt out and having to work multiple jobs in order to financially sustain their ministries and provide for their families. For instance, one participant explained, “There is no commission. That is why I have to still work as a media man so that I can, because the church is giving me an allowance--not enough for a family. I still have two daughters with me right now and my wife. The allowance the church is giving me is not enough for all of us, for the five of us.” Another stated, “Sometimes I get tired. Sometimes I’m burnt out, but I, I was... I reflected the Lord, this is my work. Sometimes God is helping me also because I very workaholic.” This sense of burden, of facing great demands with few resources, was voiced by many pastors. Some also noted a lack of formal training in dealing with these challenges as well as a lack of networking with others who might provide resources and support.

Participants also stated that there were theological barriers that prevented churches from engaging in disaster ministry, such as churches holding to “traditional”

views that the church is solely responsible for evangelism and meeting the needs of church members and not the community. For one participant, this caused division amongst his leadership team and he was frequently persecuted for engaging with the indigenous people of the community. Another discussed the negative feedback he receives from what he describes as a more “holistic” approach to ministry:

Even the pastors are many times of other churches, they call me very liberal or whatever. But what I'm doing is not a social gospel; it's not dominionism. It's not just the gospel. But this is holistic development. Because I believe in the shalom, and shalom is reconciliation with God, reconciliation for yourself, reconciliation with one another in the community, as well as environment, so I got other programs on environmental issues, when in fact, this time I'm starting an organic market because I have garden. I have children to feed in the church... Truly, that is why it's not an easy journey for me. You know, some persecution, some bad talks in all this, but we have to keep pushing because – especially my engagement with Islam.

Statements like these reveal how the people most directly engaged in relief work undergo changes that risk separating them from the members of their church who do not share that experience and perspective. One pastor of a mega-church church in the Philippines specifically discussed the theological challenges of having a large congregation in which members, according to the pastor, only thought of their own needs. The pastor was acutely aware of the needs of the community and struggled with how to convey this to the members.

Churches are also often opposed to collaborating with the government because of the government's history of corruption and oppression, as well as a lack of trust in political

leaders. When asked about the hesitancy to work with government, a participant explained, “Uh, maybe we don’t want to be tainted or identified with them. And, we don’t want to give them reason to ask favor from us when its election time. So they could not go to our pulpit. I never practice that. I discourage also my workers too.” For the organizations that were working alongside the government, there were also often issues coordinating with one another.

Furthermore, pastors reported finding a lack of commitment of churches to remain committed to disaster response and providing aid for the poor and marginalized. “There is really a problem because, as the days went by, it seems like people are fading away, in commitment fading, and this time I think we only have 5 to 10 churches actively working two years after.”

A challenge that is unique to organizations in the Philippines is that the trainings the leaders receive are taught from a Western viewpoint that is not adapted to the Filipino culture and context. One pastor, in particular, explained the issue:

Because I noticed that with all due respect to our Western brethren, all of the seminaries here are all run by Western-trained people. [...] it's a good thing too that the church is evolving now. Local pastors and theologians are beginning to reflect on our own situation and our own world, developing our own view of God and his work and Christ's teaching, our own Christianity. [...] perhaps a Western or other culture where they don't want to be spoon-fed. They want to think for themselves.

Finally, one participant discussed at length a specific cultural challenge, namely, the lack of a national emergency response system in the Philippines. He described a corrupt emergency medical system based on privilege, where those who can afford the greater cost

are able to receive medical services more quickly, while the majority of the population are unlikely to receive medical attention in a timely manner. The primary focus of this work was to create a more efficient emergency response system for the broader population.

4. Needs

As pastors worked in disaster ministry they became much more aware of the needs in the community as well as their own resource needs (which are discussed separately). Needs were based on what the organization identified as a current need or things they wished they had. Needs of the participants included financial, human, material, educational, intra-organizational, collaborative, and spiritual needs. Nearly every participant emphasized the need for financial resources. One participant remarked, “I even have to raise [money] for my own airfare and food, because they are very poor also in the province.” This element of needing resources and having to find them outside of the community being served was repeated by pastors serving the poor communities. Further, participants often listed material needs, including books, technological resources, and vehicles for commute and disaster response. The need for trainings and consultations, particularly training to work with trauma victims (i.e. psychosocial training), was a particular need for the pastors, as well as Bible and theology trainings, technical trainings, and education on law and disaster management. One pastor highlighted the need for collaboration and more access to resources by saying, “Personally, I need to learn how to network more...and then, you know, how to tap resources we can't see. I know the resources are out there, but how do I tap that? How do I get access?”

In terms of intra-organizational growth, participants emphasized the need for conflict resolution and growth within their organizations and churches. Teachings and trainings are often Western and not adapted for Filipino culture; many saw this as a particular need within their churches and organizations. Many in churches also emphasized the need for greater communication, prayer, and intentionality in outreach among church members and leaders. Finally, many leaders recognized the need to collaborate with other organizations and churches. For instance, one pastor stated,

...Like this consultation. This encourages me, because I find...I'm not alone. Because if I am, if I'm not joining this kind of forum, if I'm not joining this other consultations, many times, I find myself, I'm the only one. But when I begin to see - like this disaster management - that is where I'm also into, it encourages me. So I think we have to find people that are along with us. Don't begin to push your self to people who do not run with your vision. Otherwise, you'll burn out; you will try to conform with them.

5. Resources.

Resources were anything used to accomplish tasks or run programs (building, money, people, donor, etc.) that equip the church to carry out services. Churches utilized a variety of resources that commonly fell into the categories of financial, human, physical materials, and personal assets. Churches derived financial resources through tithes and offerings, the government, faith-based NGO's, and non-church related income of pastors (e.g., income from fixing broken computers or teaching values formation classes). Human resources included church staff and volunteers, which included youth trained for disaster response and professionals in areas of teaching, construction, and health

care. Furthermore, pastors considered themselves and their families to be key resources for their ministries, with their efforts being integral to the church's mission. Others discussed self-sustaining programs (e.g., school, garden, etc. facilitated by church) that provide them with funding and other material goods (e.g., food). Material resources included owned, borrowed and rented facilities, owned and borrowed vehicles, and relief goods (i.e., food, construction materials, school supplies) from various organizations. Pastors also utilized their own materials (e.g., vehicles) as resources for the church. Personal assets such as biblical/theological training, personal education, prior vocational experience, and various seminars and trainings were considered resources for ministry. In addition, one pastor pointed to his experiences in cross-cultural contexts as strengthening his ministry. Overall, pastors pointed to God as a resource for their ministries, suggesting that He provides for the work He is calling them to do:

There were times where we don't know what we eat tomorrow and then someone will call and say, 'Pastor you have to go here.' 'Why?' 'You have a check.' My wife and I experience those walking crow. Remember uh, remember prophet, uh Elijah? There are many experiences that sometimes my wife told me, 'Where will we have our lunch or how can we...' The Lord has sent us here. Sometime during trainings, the Lord has sent us here, then maybe he will send a crow. And then there will be a, within 15-20 minutes, God will send a crow.

Financial resources were almost always limited, and churches usually had to fund their programs through tithes or from personal resources. One pastor was able to "fix computers in [his] free time" and received funds from his wife's job as a teacher. Human resources were another key component. According to one pastor, "The first thing I have is

to volunteer ourselves,” and many considered themselves and their families to be key resources for their ministries, with their efforts being integral to the church’s mission. Other churches relied on their trainees to run their programs. Material goods were essential to providing disaster relief, and churches acquired them “through different ways of networking - calling friends, doctors, business people,” or through collaborating with NGOs or the government. NGOs and government organizations could also be tapped for training resources. One particularly effective program, a self-sustaining gardening and food market project, exemplifies innovative and effective use of these resources. In this project, vegetables and fruits were grown and then sold at a market that was managed by youths who were trained and supervised by the pastor with business skills from his prior work experience. This market generated income to support itself and grow more food, while simultaneously providing youths with more vocational and leadership experience. This example highlights the way in which a pastor’s personal experience was combined with resources obtained through government collaboration to develop a program that used trained volunteers in order to generate financial resources

6. Services

The services theme refers to the means by which the church carried out their mission to serve those in need. Churches generally concentrated services on relief efforts related to various forms of disaster (i.e., natural and manmade) and (in some cases) community development. A commonality across different types of service was, as one pastor put it, “helping individuals and groups make sense of their current situation and see where God is in the situation.” More than just the provision of services, the pastors saw their work they as reflecting the greater evangelistic mission of their church. This impact

of mission on services included providing discipleship, leading Bible studies (sometimes called “Family Development Sessions”), and incorporating religious elements into their church programs and ministries. One pastor named these evangelistic underpinnings of service when explaining how “...the kind of presentation of the gospel is you're going to incorporate it to other programs. Just like feeding program. Give them first the food, and then your love, and later on the love of Jesus.” Another pastor expressed a similar goal in fewer words: “Share the good news, empower the people. Bring them physical blessing.”

Overall, services fit into categories of short-term and long-term work. Some programs increased collaboration and communication between churches or provided trainings to equip other churches and leaders to participate in disaster relief. Common short term work included natural and manmade disaster response services such as needs assessments and the distribution of resources (e.g., food, construction materials), and peace negotiations. At times, the government would recognize the quality of services provided by churches in areas of disaster relief and peace negotiation by inviting them to continue this work with government support. One pastor with experience in peace negotiations recounted how “the government invited us because of our experience...they invited us... ‘can you help us mediate between the two warring factions?’” Other services aimed at rehabilitation and community development included construction projects, as well as education and livelihood trainings. Less common interventions included trauma and medical services, working gardens as food source for feeding programs, setting up an emergency response service for their area, and dance and theater classes for at-risk youth. A common theme underlying the development and maintenance of these more unique services was an awareness of a community’s specific needs.

7. Target Populations

Pastors and ministry leaders worked in a variety of geographical locations with the three major regions of the Philippines (i.e., Visays, Mindanao, and Luzon), and they targeted a variety of specific populations. In general, the interviews revealed two target groups, including the poor and marginalized in the surrounding community and church congregations and staff. Several pastors talked about their commitment to the “*poorest of the poor*,” including street children and their families, internally displaced persons, and others. On the other hand, one pastor discussed the extent of his church obligations which appeared to take up all of his available time and resources in ministry.

I'm supposed to pastor, shepherd all the pastoral team and ministry heads, plus their individual, they have each an individual ministry teams. That's my immediate congregation... At the same time, I am also tasked to look after the concerns and the welfare of the individual satellite pastors. There are about 12 now... But under the main, we call “core staff,” which is the full-time church workers, about 40, aside from the three ministries I mentioned earlier, there are also support ministries.

More specifically, the type of population served was often influenced geographically, with target groups being within or surrounding the church. Another influential factor was related to the impact of both natural and manmade disasters, with both areas affected and unaffected by these disasters becoming targets for churches previously uninvolved in ministering to that specific population or geographic region. Populations targeted in the Visayas area tended to center on those most impacted by typhoons and tropical storms (e.g., Yolanda and Ondey). In the Mindanao region, ministries targeted those impacted by violence in this region, including internally displaced persons, orphaned youth, out of

school youth, Muslim Filipinos, and farmers. Populations targeted in Luzon included street children and their families, and out of school youth from squatter's areas (e.g. from squatter's areas). Furthermore, one pastor targeted individuals with disabilities, another targeted domestic workers, and another was involved with campus ministry. Other target populations in the Luzon area were church members and the pastoral staff. Overall, all but one church identified the larger community as a target population in their ministerial work.

8. Collaboration

Church leaders reported collaborating with many groups in many different forms, and the nature of the program goals often dictated which organizations become collaborating partners. Collaboration most often occurs with church organizations (e.g., PCEC), other individual churches, NGOs (e.g., PHILrads, IHELP, Red Cross, etc.), and the government on both national and local levels (e.g., DSWD, TESDA, government committees, and barangay captains). Resulting programs included ministry opportunities, education, peace and reconciliation, training and disaster relief as well as rehabilitation.

Collaboration with the government has been a slowly growing trend. Some church leaders began developing a partnership by holding a government office, and others gained recognition as an NGO in order to open the door to collaboration. For example, one reported, "From that point on, I have the ID as a representative with the anti-poverty commission. Now it's totally the local government that invites us because there's always a slot for NGOs recognized by national government." In the case of peace and reconciliation work, governing bodies recognized and sought out churches that were already experienced in order to "help [them] mediate between the two warring factions."

When collaborating with the government, churches have become involved in programs about values formation, cash assistance programs, providing training and education, and sometimes disaster relief or peace and reconciliation. Pastors frequently used values formation as a way to partner with the government while teaching Christian values. Churches that targeted impoverished populations became involved with cash assistance programs, and some used partnerships to provide vocational trainings to participants. One innovative partnership with the Department of Agriculture led to the development of a self-sustaining food market operated by youths under the supervision of a pastor. Another unique opportunity afforded through government collaboration involved shaping community policies. One pastor uses his position in the local government to address “gambling,” “selling drinks and cigarettes to children,” and other things “that are not supposed to be [done].”

Discussion

The major challenges expressed by our subjects were *lack of resources, corruption, and burnout*. A lack of resources limits what services church leaders are able to provide on a regular basis. These leaders feel they are trying to do more than they can reasonably be expected to accomplish. Furthermore, they are overworked and underpaid. They are in a poor area, which means the local resources are insufficient to support the needed ministries of the church. As a result they often have to work other jobs to be able to support their roles as pastors in a case of the poor serving the poor. The underlying theme here is that pastors are closer to the needs of the community in the sense that they are in direct contact and are acutely aware of the great needs that exist in the community. Their

church members are generally less exposed to these needs, resulting in increasing tension as pastors work to engage members in serving the community needs. This varied depending on whether the church was in a disaster area, and thus the members more directly exposed to the impact of a disaster, or more removed from a disaster, such as being located in an urban not exposed to a disaster. The pastors attempt to compensate for this gap between resources and needs by using personal resources, and thus put themselves at great risk for burnout, for themselves and for their families.

The lack of resources leads to the second major concern of sustaining programs. Some of our subjects revealed unique strategies for overcoming their limited funding and financial dependence on outside sources. Many pastors used their own personal funds to accomplish the ministry goals, and several drew on previous job experience or took a second job (or had working family members) in order to gain more funds. However, this often created a second challenge in that they were now draining their own personal resources in order to carry out their ministries. Some churches began developing self-sustaining work projects as a solution to the problem. For instance one person set up his own foundation and now collaborates with the government in order to receive funding. However, as mentioned previously, rather than depending solely on the government or other NGOs for its funding and resources, the church started a garden and organic market. They also started a second program that trains and empowers youth to manage similar gardens and markets. In another example, the church started a school (primary and secondary school) that pays for itself and provides some funds for the church's ministry. These examples suggest that social entrepreneur skills are important to the existence of many of these ministries.

Finally, corruption is a third theme among the people we interviewed. The government is widely viewed as corrupt, making a partnership with the government in effect, in the eyes of many pastors, a pact with the devil. Corruption among churches was less of a focus in the interviews, but suggested as another area of concern. In some cases churches will distribute materials to those they see in need, which is not always consistent with the aims of the supplier or donor. There is an ongoing effort among church associations to increase monitoring and accountability, but this is not well developed at this time.

As we began this project we anticipated seeing a pattern to the development of church disaster ministries. What we found was a pattern to the issues faced in these ministries, but the development of programs over time was largely reactive. For example, people would start out distributing materials and find themselves serving people exposed to overwhelming trauma. In response, they would begin developing new skill sets or start other programs. In this sense the growth of these programs follows what we see in many countries where the initial concept of what is needed, in fact the very concept of what it means to do disaster ministry, is different than the reality on the ground. These pastors were learning that relief work is one phase in serving the community, and that the needs are varied, long term, and well beyond the current resources available to address them. As they learn these lessons they are faced with difficult choices, such as engaging their own families to serve the ministry, partner with government and expose the church to great risks, and whether to put pressure on the church members to be more engaged. Given that experience, these pastors had many recommendations, some stated directly, and some we inferred from their statements

Recommendations

Throughout the interview, participants gave several recommendations for pastors. In addition, the concerns and challenges they expressed implied unstated needs, which we (the research team) attempted to address through recommendations of our own:

1. The need to increase education among members and leaders about the risks and challenges of disaster ministry

Some of the pastors expressed wanting the church members to align with the mission of the church to serve community, whether through disaster ministry or other types of programs; however, they did not specifically state the need for education about the risks and challenges of disaster ministry.

2. The need for seminaries to do more to train future pastors in how to manage these challenges

Some thought the government needed to do more in the realm of disaster response. NGOs and churches are under-resourced to meet the needs in the Philippines. They are lacking the manpower, the funds, and the physical resources (e.g., vehicles) to be able to meet the needs of the people in the Philippines.

3. The need for networking and for better systems of identifying and meeting needs

4. The need to look to the talents, abilities and professions of congregational members in community ministry, or in filling positions in various ministries (e.g., disaster ministry)

5. The need to find a balance between evangelism and social gospel

A number of pastors mentioned difficulties getting other churches engaged or within their own leadership and congregations due to inadequate theological views. These were sourced primarily in theological concerns about the Gospel and the suspicion that being socially engaged would lead to a social gospel. Other churches simply lacked a grounding to understand the need for a long-term relationship with the needy, thinking that sufficient ministry could be carried out in a single act of giving. Lastly, many churches preferred to care for their own and lacked a theological conviction to reach out to others who were not already part of their own group.

The interviews revealed the various ways that pastors and churches face challenges when they become directly involved in serving the survivors of major disasters. We believe that pastors should be more aware of the potential challenges so that they can consider how they will be influenced and how this will impact their other ministries. Overall, this qualitative study merely scratches the surface of these challenges and leaves many questions still to be answered. Further research is needed to explore longer-term resolutions of the challenges to see if they are transitory or have long-term consequences. Seminaries and other educational programs might consider incorporating these practical, praxis-oriented issues into classes on community ministry.

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