

Ministries to Hold Free Sessions on Dealing With Grief in Wake of Sandy

Somebody Cares International, known for its long-term follow-up in communities touched by tragedy, will partner next week with Victim Relief Ministries, FirstFruits Crisis Response and the New York Christian Resource Center to present a series of free sessions on overcoming grief and trauma to communities still coping with the impact of Superstorm Sandy.

More than 100 people died and millions were left without power when the storm hit the Eastern seaboard Oct. 29. Now, more than two months later, physical, financial and spiritual needs remain high.

The 112th Congress adjourned this week after the House failed to vote on a multi-billion dollar relief bill, touching off a national controversy. The Senate passed a bill earlier, but both houses will have to begin the process anew in the new Congress that convened Thursday.

In the meantime, many charities are already working in the area, providing relief.

"We want to serve the many individuals and families impacted by Sandy who feel a sense of anxiety and fear," said Dr. Doug Stringer, the founder of Somebody Cares International. "Although everyday life has resumed for many, some will be reeling from this for years to come."

After Sandy, Somebody Cares began working with ministry partners in the area, including Jim Esposito, Executive Director of New York Christian Resource Center. Initially, the Somebody Cares network of ministries brought in truckloads of food, clothing and supplies as well as provided hot meals and other assistance to people in need.

Somebody Cares and its partner ministries will hold sessions Jan. 9-12 on overcoming grief and trauma at multiple locations in New York and New Jersey, the hardest-hit states.

Healing and Hope sessions will be open to anyone in need and held at:

- 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 9, Hope Cathedral, 46 Bennetts Mills Road, Jackson, N.J.
- 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 11, Evangel Church, 39-20 27th St., Queens, N.Y.

In addition to encouraging attendees, Stringer and others will lead prayer and worship at each session.

Compassionate Crisis Care sessions will focus on equipping community leaders and pastors to minister to their communities and be held at the following locations:

- 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 10, Hope Cathedral, 46 Bennetts Mills Rd., Jackson, N.J.
- 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Friday, Jan. 11, New York School of Urban Ministry, 31-10 47th Street, Astoria, N.Y.
- 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 12, Christian Pentecostal Church, 1000 Targee Street, Staten Island, N.Y.

Although all sessions are free and include lunch, attendees are asked to register at . Besides Stringer, Dr. Edward Smith, president of Victim Relief Ministries, and Dr. Paul Van Valin, founder and president of Eden Counseling Ministries and FirstFruits Crisis Response, will speak at the sessions.

Victim Relief Ministries has provided grief and trauma counseling after the New Life Church shootings in Colorado Springs and the Virginia Tech shootings, as well as serving in other disaster response situations across the country and around the world.

FirstFruits Crisis Response, a division of Eden Counseling Ministries, was founded after the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks and trains and mobilizes crisis responders who provide

support, counseling and counselor training.

New York Christian Resource Center supports churches and other helping organizations by discovering and administering material, spiritual, mental health and human resources to positively impact communities and families in times of need and crisis.