

Case Studies—Congregational Trauma, Resilience, and Healing  
October 15, 2022  
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Trauma-informed response:

- A. **Realize** the widespread extent of trauma already present in the people involved.
- B. **Recognize** the signs and symptoms of trauma in individuals and congregation.
- C. **Respond** with humble curiosity, seeking to learn from the folks affected by trauma.
- D. **Resist** further harm by minimizing risk of re-traumatization and secondary traumatization.
- E. **Reconnect** victims to loved ones, caring communities, and faith.

1. **Pastor Kellie** is considering an appointment to Elmsdale Church, in which the former pastor was found guilty of sexually exploiting an adult congregant and was removed from ministry. However, members of the community exhibit a wide array of emotions, and some are in denial about the outcome of the church trial. Pastor Kellie is unsure about how she would handle the situation.

2. **Michael** attended adult Sunday School class regularly until the new study of Christian approaches to war. He has been absent or extremely tardy several times lately. During the most recent class, he became angry during a discussion of a Bible passage and left the room.

3. First Church experiences turmoil every autumn during their financial pledge drive. The treasurer expresses anxiety about the next year's budget; the church council chair does not want to talk about money in church; and long-time members show distrust about the budgetary process. **Pastor Linda** wonders why this event elicits such extreme responses in the congregation.

4. **Rev. Miller** serves a predominantly African American congregation in Philadelphia. On Thursday, September 1, 2022, he saw news about the killing of an unarmed Black man shot in bed by an Ohio police officer. The body-camera footage showed the officer pushing open a bedroom door and immediately firing at 20-year-old Donovan Lewis. Rev. Miller was planning to spend the evening working on his sermon, but he cannot seem to concentrate.

5. Four months ago, a tropical storm ravaged the community on the east side of Asbury UMC. The west side of the community suffered minimal damage. Church members live in both areas. The church building was left intact. **Deacon Paul** leads an effort to help neighboring families recover. However, church members are getting upset with each other about this ministry. Some are impatient with slow progress, others are ready to move on to another cause, still others have stopped volunteering, giving various reasons for their departure from this effort.

6. Hope Church recently returned to in-person worship after nearly two years of online-only worship during COVID. **Chaplain Chris** leads the prayer team and coordinates home visits with members. Chris has noticed a high level of anxiety among the congregation, even after they returned to in-person worship. In fact, people seem to be more anxious now, so Chris brings up the issue during staff meeting.

## Values and Principles of Trauma-Informed Care



### TRAUMA

**abandonment**  
**disruption**  
**interruption**  
**isolation**  
**separation**

### FAITH PRACTICES

**Prayer**  
**Ritual**  
**Story**  
**Accompaniment**  
**Community-building**

### HEALING

**recognition**  
**re-integration**  
**re-narration**  
**solidarity**  
**re-connection**