HDI is the first faith-based academic disaster research center in the country.

Our mission is to help the church prepare and care for a disaster-filled world.

We help by translating research advances into biblically-based educational programs, trainings, resources, outreach activities, and partnerships.
The church never closed during Covid-19, and neither did Wheaton College’s Humanitarian Disaster Institute. Six months ago we moved our M.A. in Humanitarian and Disaster Leadership program fully online. We also sought to respond in these extraordinary times to Micah 6:8’s call to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.”

As you’ll see in this report, in many areas we were the first in the country to respond in serving the church. Our team launched into action weeks before the global pandemic declaration to serve vulnerable people and churches around the world.

Our past experiences and research have made it possible for us to anticipate resources that would be needed each step of the way. We also know the response to this pandemic is far from over. We are committed to keep learning, to keep working with you, and to keep loving our neighbors in ways that are both biblically-based and research-based.

The stories and statistics you’ll see are our way to be transparent and accountable as we seek to witness to God’s love in Christ. We also share these numbers to testify to the ways our HDI colleagues, students, alumni — and the entire Wheaton College community — are serving Christ and His Kingdom.

We present this report with lament for the losses we’ve all seen—but also with hope as followers of Jesus.

Faithfully Responding, Not Fearfully Panicking

Jamie Aten
HDI Co-Director

Kent Annan
HDI Co-Director
HDI's COVID-19
Six-Month Impact Summary

+603,000,000
People Reached
Based on Critical Mention statistics

29,620
People Trained

118
New Resources

33,767
Resource Downloads

32
Language Translations

22
M.A. Students Graduated
47 Now Enrolled

16
Events Hosted Online

56
Videos Created
41,000 views

522,160
Website Pageviews

208
Articles Published

1,102
Media Citations
Testimonials

HDI has led the evangelical response to COVID-19 each step of the way, helping churches around the world to navigate the challenges with faith, wisdom, and vision over the last 6 months.

- Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals

It was an honor for Healthcare Ready to partner with Wheaton College’s Disaster Institute to create a valuable and much-needed resource guide for churches across the country to use when faced with the significant dual challenges of racial unrest and the COVID-19 pandemic. Working together, we were able to provide church leaders with practical ways to address the systemic health and social inequities that have placed people from racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk from COVID-19 and become collective agents of change for good.

- Nicolette Louissaint, President & Executive Director, Healthcare Ready

With devastating events seemingly becoming more and more routine, the need for Wheaton’s Humanitarian Disaster Institute has never been greater. HDI’s response since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis has been especially inspiring, and necessary. HDI has been at the forefront of the evangelical church’s response to the global pandemic, providing resources for the churches and other ministries worldwide.

- Philip Ryken, President, Wheaton College
First Month Response

Following are a few highlights of how our team helped respond during the first month during the pandemic declaration in the U.S.

1st
Published article: "Is your church ready for the coronavirus?" in Facts & Trends

2.27.20

1st
Released Preparing Your Church for Coronavirus manual and planning template

3.11.20

1st
Launched online resource page at wheaton.edu/HDI-covid19

3.11.20

1st
To mobilize churches online for COVID-19

3.12.20

1st
Founded social media movement: #covid19church

3.12.20

1st
Began weekly webinar series with the National Association of Evangelicals

3.13.20

1st
Committed to continuing webinar series together through duration of COVID-19

3.17.20

1st
Partnered with Ed Stetzer and The Wheaton College Billy Graham Center along with Rick Warren and The PEACE Plan (Saddleback Church) on coronavirusandthechurch.com

3.26.20

1st
Launched two-day virtual conference with National Association of Evangelicals: COVID-19 Online Church Summit

3.26.20
A Research-Based and Ministry-Based Approach to Helping

Spiritual First Aid is based on our team’s disaster psychology of religion/spirituality research and the disaster ministry work we have conducted around the globe for the past 15 years. During this time, we spent the last four years field testing and refining Spiritual First Aid.

Based on what we were learning from responding to COVID-19 we jumped into action to create the first COVID-19 spiritual and emotional care manual and intervention specifically designed for helping while socially distancing.

Our research in public health emergencies such as the Ebola outbreak, natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, and humanitarian crises ranging from the Syrian refugee crisis to the Botswana drought are a few of the many examples of what informed our approach.

We don’t do research for research’s sake—we do research to make a difference.

We are pioneering research that helps people and churches worldwide live more faithfully and resiliently.

We use research as a practical tool for helping others impacted by disasters like COVID-19.

Research Partnerships

HDI is collaborating with world-class Christian scholars at top faith-based and research colleges and universities on pandemic research.

Current COVID-19 Studies

- Hope & Health
- Faith & Older Adults
- Spiritual Fortitude
- Pastor Burnout

We don’t do research for research’s sake—we do research to make a difference.

We are pioneering research that helps people and churches worldwide live more faithfully and resiliently.

We use research as a practical tool for helping others impacted by disasters like COVID-19.

A Research-Based and Ministry-Based Approach to Helping

Spiritual First Aid is based on our team’s disaster psychology of religion/spirituality research and the disaster ministry work we have conducted around the globe for the past 15 years. During this time, we spent the last four years field testing and refining Spiritual First Aid.

Based on what we were learning from responding to COVID-19 we jumped into action to create the first COVID-19 spiritual and emotional care manual and intervention specifically designed for helping while socially distancing.

Our research in public health emergencies such as the Ebola outbreak, natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, and humanitarian crises ranging from the Syrian refugee crisis to the Botswana drought are a few of the many examples of what informed our approach.

Research Partnerships

HDI is collaborating with world-class Christian scholars at top faith-based and research colleges and universities on pandemic research.

Current COVID-19 Studies

- Hope & Health
- Faith & Older Adults
- Spiritual Fortitude
- Pastor Burnout
Our M.A. in Humanitarian & Disaster Leadership (HDL) program was the first to return to studying in-person at Wheaton College this summer. Toward the end of day one we had to evacuate and take shelter in the basement as an EF-1 tornado touched down across the street. After getting to safety we continued class as shown and processed what could be learned from this unique experience.

Out of this experience in the classroom, our team and students created a manual for Christian professors and a manual for college students that were distributed around Wheaton College and the country.

Our M.A. in HDL program was the first to return to studying in-person at Wheaton College this summer. Toward the end of day one we had to evacuate and take shelter in the basement as an EF-1 tornado touched down across the street. After getting to safety we continued class as shown and processed what could be learned from this unique experience.

Out of this experience in the classroom, our team and students created a manual for Christian professors and a manual for college students that were distributed around Wheaton College and the country.

Our M.A. in HDL program was the first to return to studying in-person at Wheaton College this summer. Toward the end of day one we had to evacuate and take shelter in the basement as an EF-1 tornado touched down across the street. After getting to safety we continued class as shown and processed what could be learned from this unique experience.

Out of this experience in the classroom, our team and students created a manual for Christian professors and a manual for college students that were distributed around Wheaton College and the country.

NEW: This fall we’ve also started a new joint Trauma Certificate with the Clinical Mental Health Program at Wheaton College.

Our students are putting what they are learning in the classroom into practice by responding to COVID-19.

---

**M.A. HDL**

- **Campus Track**
- **Online Track**
- **Accelerated Track**
  - For Wheaton College undergraduate students

**Field Work Placements**

- **Sample Summer Internships**
  - Samaritan’s Purse
  - Red Cross
  - White House Anti-Human Trafficking Task-Force

**IMPACT**

- **20 Organizations Served**
- **22 Resources Created**
- **3,520 Service Hours Provided**
Student Stories

When COVID-19 hit the world, I pivoted my Field Work project to create something tangible for Re:New that can be applied to other nonprofits as our organization pivoted to sew donated masks to those working on the front lines. This summer, I have been creating a disaster preparedness guide for small nonprofits and using the pandemic while working at Re:New as a case study.

Navigating this season of leadership at an organization looked different everyday, with some time being spent on site and some at home. This incredibly humbling season has taught me that the Lord is always one step ahead, that there is wisdom in being prepared, and that anything is possible with the help of community.

- Kristi Zboncak, M.A. ’20, executive director of Re:New Project, a nonprofit that provides a safe space and employment for refugee women who have resettled in the Chicago suburbs

It means a lot for me to translate this handbook into my mother language, Chinese. [It] has been challenging yet meaningful. I especially feel grateful to share this great resource with my Asian Christian community back in Taiwan and Hong Kong. During the translating period, I deeply felt that God has prepared everyone to use our own experience, background, and talent to serve his kingdom!

- Kailin Huang, M.A. ’20, who worked on Chinese translations for HDI manuals
After working my first few months with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, I was virtually deployed to respond specifically to COVID-19. For two months at the beginning of the pandemic, I was a planning specialist. I attended (virtual) briefings regularly, tracked the provision/operation of specific resources, and debriefed staff on status reports. Since FEMA strives to accomplish their federal role as one that supports and serves the State, I value how HDL prepared me to be a person of humble inquiry—one who engages others with attentiveness, genuine curiosity, and informed action.

- Michael Sawyer, M.A. ’19, Hazard Mitigation Grants Specialist, FEMA

We partnered with Wheaton alum Beverly Hancock, Senior Director of Leadership Development at the American Organization for Nursing Leadership, to adapt a series of tipsheets for nurses around the country.

Coping and Caring for Oneself During COVID-19: Practical Steps for Nurse Leaders

COVID-19 brings forth a new level of stress and uncertainty to the world and health care. To care for others well during this season of COVID-19 will require us to learn how to care for ourselves at the same time.

Here are some practical steps you can take to ensure that you are properly attending to your own needs so that you can in turn sustainably attend to the needs of others:

1. **Take the necessary steps to protect yourself and loved ones.**
   - The World Health Organization suggests staying informed but avoiding overexposure to news that might cause you to feel anxious or distressed. Take reasonable and well-informed
Our COVID-19 Church Online Summit was the first digital summit of its kind for churches and church leaders, in partnership with the National Association of Evangelicals. In a time of crisis, church leaders could learn from leaders around the world about how your church can respond to the coronavirus outbreak.

Our Spiritual First Aid Summit brought together Christian leaders from around the globe who were inspired and equipped to care for their neighbors, churches, communities, and world during COVID-19 and beyond.

11,294 Attendees for COVID-19 Church Summit

45K Video Impressions Combined

5,677 Attendees for Spiritual First Aid Summit
Webinar & Town Hall Series

HDI-NAE Ongoing Webinar & Town Hall Series
- Series announced day pandemic was declared
- Series launched same day as U.S. national emergency declared
- Series will continue for however long it is needed
- Examples: “Spiritual & Mental Health for Children,” “Faith in Pandemic Times.”

Online Spiritual & Emotional Courses
We created the very 1st online COVID-19 spiritual and emotional care courses in the world—and they’re free. Currently we have over 230 active students participating across our courses.
- Understanding & Responding to Suffering
- Providing Practical Presence
- Preventing COVID-19
- Compassion Fatigue and Burnout
- Basic Disaster Spiritual Care Helping Skills
Resources

All our resources are biblically-based and research-based to help teach best-practices in practical ways for individuals, churches, nonprofits, and NGOs.

Where Resources Used: 39 Countries

---

HDI has provided important leadership at a critical time for the church and the world, particularly with the ‘Reopening the Church’ resources developed with the National Association of Evangelicals. Their booklet ‘Guide to Reopening Church Services’ is exemplary in both respecting established scientific findings and being thoroughly based in scripture. We’ve been proud to recommend it at BioLogos.

- Deborah Haarsma, President, BioLogos
Outreach

The 208 articles we published and 1,102 times we were cited in the media during the first 6 months of COVID-19 were a chance to provide guidance and insight based on our work. These appeared in outlets including the following:

- The New York Times
- The Washington Post
- USA TODAY
- Christianity Today
- MOODY Radio
- RNS
- FOX News
- CBN
- BBC Radio

HDI lives out its vision to prepare the church — and lay providers everywhere — to care for a disaster-filled world.

- Laura Shannonhouse, Georgia State University
Partnerships

We are grateful for each of the many organizations that we’ve had the opportunity to partner with in our COVID-19 response.

**Summit Sponsors**

- 24-7 Prayer
- Accord Network
- Association of Related Churches
- Barna + gloo
- Billy Graham Center
- Bread for the World
- Canadian Christian Relief & Development Association
- Christianity Today
- Coronavirus and the Church
- Council of Christian Colleges and Universities
- Church Multiplication Network
- DAI
- ECFA
- Evangelicals for Social Action
- Healthcare Ready
- InterVarsity Press
- Institute for Faith and Resilience
- K-LOVE Crisis Response Care
- Let My People Go
- Medical Ambassadors International
- National Latinio Evangelical Coalition
- Northstar Church Network
- One Million Thumbprints
- Resilient Church Leadership
- Spire
- The Evangelical Covenant Church
- Trauma Healing Institute - American Bible Society
- Wheaton College Graduate School
- World Hope International
- World Relief
- World Renew

We are partnering with NavPress to get Eugene Peterson’s *The Message of Hope* to those that need it most. How it works: When you buy a copy of *The Message of Hope*, NavPress will send a copy on your behalf to an organization HDI is working with on the frontlines of ministry.
HDI is committed to going the distance in serving during the COVID-19 crisis. As a hub for Christians responding to crises, we will continue to research, educate, train, create resources, convene, do outreach, and partner. We love collaborating, so wanted to offer some ways that you can get involved:

- **Pray**
  We’ve been praying throughout this response, and we would love to pray with you — and we also value your prayers as we serve.

- **Share Resources**
  All of the resources we create and research that we do is **free**. We love sharing with you — and love when you share with others! Please feel free to share anything that would be helpful with your church, colleagues, friends, or family.

- **Partner**
  Please reach out by **email** if you see a way we might be able to work together on any aspect of what we do.

- **Stay Connected for Resources and Training**
  We’d love to stay in touch with you. We send a weekly newsletter by email to provide the most up-to-date and helpful information. Over the next year we will be launching several new exciting training opportunities to equip church lay helpers and leaders as well as NGO leaders. You can sign up [here](#).

- **Study with Us**
  We’d love for you to study with us in our M.A. in humanitarian and disaster leadership or our trauma certificate. The M.A. can be completed in one year on campus or two years online. You can learn more [here](#).

- **Give**
  We are grateful to have been able to offer everything we’ve done in response to COVID-19 for free. We are committed to continuing to walk alongside churches through this historic global pandemic— but we need your help. Two ways you can give to specific needs that make an immediate difference:
  
  - **Scholarships** for students studying in our M.A. in Humanitarian and Disaster Leadership. Your gift can help a student prepare to serve the world’s most vulnerable people through crisis.
  
  - **COVID-19 Response.** Your gift can help us to keep creating and sharing resources that are used around the country and world.

  To give, please reach out by **email** or visit our **donation page** at Wheaton College.
About the Humanitarian Disaster Institute

The Humanitarian Disaster Institute was founded in 2011 at Wheaton College and is the country’s first faith-based academic disaster research center. Our mission is to help the church prepare and care in a disaster-filled world. HDI carries out our mission through research, training, convening, resourcing, and outreach activities.

Kent Annan  
Co-Director  
Director of Humanitarian & Disaster Leadership

Jamie Aten  
Co-Director & Founder  
Blanchard Chair of Humanitarian & Disaster Leadership

Edward Davis  
Associate Professor of Psychology

Samantha Ervin  
Associate Director of Education and Training

Laura Finch  
Communications Specialist

Jamie Goodwin  
Assistant Professor of Humanitarian & Disaster Leadership

Dana Krol  
Research Assistant

Laura Leonard  
Associate Director of Communications

Edward Davis  
Assistant Professor of Humanitarian & Disaster Leadership

Samantha Ervin  
Associate Director of Education and Training

Laura Finch  
Communications Specialist

Jamie Goodwin  
Assistant Professor of Humanitarian & Disaster Leadership

Dana Krol  
Research Assistant

Laura Leonard  
Associate Director of Communications

Authorized Training, Certifications, Licenses, and Resource Development Services  
To inquire about arranging an authorized HDI training, certification, manual licensing agreement, or resource development services (e.g., adapting one of our resources for your organization’s needs) please email hdi@wheaton.edu with your request.

About the Trauma Certificate  
We have also partnered with the School of Psychology, Counseling, and Family Therapy at Wheaton College Graduate School to offer a new Trauma Certificate in a specialized track specifically tailored to humanitarian and disaster responders. Learn more at wheaton.edu/HDL.

Contact Us  
Our website and social media accounts provide ongoing updates and resources for preparing your church for COVID-19. You can also find more information about our team and resources at:

Websites:  
www.wheaton.edu/hdi  
www.reopeningthechurch.com  
www.spiritualfirstaidhub.com

Facebook:  
facebook.com/WheatonHDI
Twitter:  
twitter.com/WheatonHDI
Instagram:  @wheaton_hdi

If you have any questions or suggestions about future resources that would be helpful, please email us at hdi@wheaton.edu.