



Upper Susquehanna Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Pastoral Letter *from Bishop Robert Driesen*

September 9, 2011

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

As I write these words, the flood waters have begun to recede in most areas across the Susquehanna Valley, but only after reaching record or near-record levels. Many homes and businesses have sustained damage, and numerous families have been displaced. Several of our churches and the homes of pastors and parishioners have been inundated, as the flood waters entered basements and first floors. The clean-up in most areas is yet to begin.

The Disaster Response Team of the Upper Susquehanna Synod has convened, with its initial meeting held on Thursday, September 8. A second meeting will be held this afternoon. Pastors and other leaders are being asked to share information about damage and needs to their respective conference deans.

Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries, the lead social ministry organization in this synod for disaster response, is working with us, especially through our Disaster Response Coordinator Gary Hutchinson. An initial grant of \$2,500 has already been provided for our immediate response, and a special disaster fund has been created by the synod to receive gifts from congregations and individuals in support of the clean-up. The synod office is now accepting donations to be used as relief efforts begin. Donations can be sent to us, marked "Flood Response," or can be submitted by adding the designation and amount to the normal Synodical Remittance Form. It is important to remember that at this stage, monetary donations can be used more readily than donations of items. The time will come when donations of clean-up supplies also will be sought. Diakon's Kathryn's Kloset and the four hubs on

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the territory of this synod (Shamokin Dam, Bloomsburg, South Williamsport, Mifflintown) will be an invaluable resource as we seek the necessary supplies.

Volunteers are being sought who would be willing to be part of work crews to help with clean-up efforts. This information should also be shared with conference deans so a coordinated effort can be organized. The synod's website (www.uss-elca.org) will provide regular updates about our response. Check the "What's New" menu under "News." Our Facebook page also will be updated regularly.

I know we will respond generously to the needs of our neighbors. Keep in mind that others in our region also have been affected including the Upstate New York Synod, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, the Lower Susquehanna Synod, and the New Jersey Synod. Remember all of them in your prayers.

My deep thanks to Gary Hutchinson, Disaster Response Coordinator; Pastor Karl-John Stone, Assistant to the Bishop; the Deans of the Upper Susquehanna Synod, and our many pastors and lay leaders who have been assisting in our response. May God have mercy upon us, using us to bring his mercy to all those in need. God's work. Our hands.

Yours in Christ Jesus,



Robert L. Driesen, Bishop