

January 27, 2016

Concerned Clergy and Friends:

Thank you so much for reaching out to us in Flint. Just hearing from you has been healing. I am truly experiencing what it means to be part of a connectional church.

As far as what you can do--thankfully, I have been asked that question many times in the last 10 days. Overwhelmingly, I have been unable to provide any concrete responses. At the request of Executive Presbyter, Dan Saperstein, earlier this week I met with two representatives of the initial response team from PDA and they were very helpful. Please keep checking their website: <https://pda.pcusa.org/situation/flint-michigan-water-crisis/>

As you may be aware, water resources is coming from everywhere; the government, the Red Cross, United Way, Walmart--and even all the way from Hollywood! One of the issues we are having is storing it. I also know that we are lacking volunteers but the word is getting out on how people can volunteer through the Red Cross. They need people to deliver water to shut-ins, hand out water filters and water testing materials. It's taking a minute for them to get organized. Another issue is the recycling of all the bottles! I did just hear to this week that they are beginning to address this challenge.

In the weeks and months to come PDA will have more of a strategic response. PDA has also partnered with Presbyterian Women and there is program in place for volunteers to be trained in disaster preparedness. Here is more information on this program:

<http://www.pcusa.org/news/2015/4/14/presbyterian-women-answer-call-disaster-preparedne/>
or for more information about PW Disaster Preparedness Training, contact Beth Snyder at beth.snyder@pcusa.org or visit www.pcusa.org/pda.

This crisis will have long-term effects on the residents of Flint, especially those directly impacted by the lead poisoning. I will keep you posted as I learn more. In the meantime, your prayers are needed and appreciated. My hope is that we can get all the congregations in our presbyteries praying. I would ask you consider a weekly moment of prayer in your service covering the following topics:

- the residents of Flint and the surrounding communities
- the children and families impacted by the lead poisoning
- schools needing safe water
- the environmental issues
- the various skin rashes appearing from bathing
- the long-term effects of the poisoning
- medical testing and treatment made available to all
- the elected officials
- accountability
- continued national attention and focus
- continued responsiveness where there has been unresponsiveness
- hope and faith in an environment of hopelessness and vulnerability
- volunteers—people and financial resources

- people and organizations working together for the common good
- human greed and injustice
- urban cities lacking resources and voice
- Who is your neighbor?
- the economic injustice for those who feel voiceless

I am both saddened and angered that human life is deemed obsolete by those in power because of where people reside, their ethnicity and, because of their economics. This has been going on for almost two years and only now due to the election of our new mayor, Dr. Karen Weaver, and the removal of the emergency manager, has the city gained some local control and the water crisis surfaced nationally. There is an overarching feeling of helplessness and fear of the repercussions by the residents because the matter has gone unrecognized and unaddressed for so long.

If you are in the area and wish to volunteer, the United Way of Genesee County, the Michigan Community Service Commission and the American Red Cross of East Central Bay-Michigan have come together to operate the volunteer center. They do need volunteers to do data entry (inside work), as well as going out into the community (must be at least 18 years of age) to distribute water, filters, etc.

The Volunteer Reception Center Hours:

M-F 11:00am-6:30pm

Saturday 9:00am—2:00pm

Sunday Noon-5:00pm

American Red Cross

1401 S. Grand Traverse Street

Flint, MI 48503

Another resource is V.O.A.D (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster). The Michigan chapter's telephone number is 888-803-8858 or their website:

<https://mivoad.communityos.org/cms/home>

Please pass along this information and let's bombard the heavens with our prayers.

Blessings and thanks,

Rev. Desiree A. Lawson

Pastor

Trinity United Presbyterian Church (USA)