

RESOLUTION 2016-01

Flint, Michigan, Water Crisis

Rationale:

The Flint, Michigan, Water Crisis began shortly after April 2014 when the State of Michigan appointed Emergency Manager of Flint, population of nearly 100,000, implemented drawing water from the Flint River for the public water system instead of buying water from the City of Detroit, Michigan. Soon after the switch to Flint River water, many of the residents of the city began to notice clouded water, smells and tastes that indicated to them that the water was not safe. Concerns raised by the citizens and by some experts were dismissed compounding the problem that was the result of water not properly tested and treated, which allowed lead to leach from the water pipes and into the water. The water remains unsafe for drinking and in some cases, for cleaning and doing dishes.

ELCA World Hunger, Poverty and Justice Staff have offered support and the ELCA Washington Office is supporting Advocacy Efforts on Capitol hill to provide resources to fix the broken water system. With support from congregations and people in the Southeast Michigan Synod and around the ELCA, Salem Lutheran Church in Flint has been able to provide information, nutrition and safe water for people in its neighborhood. Tens of thousands bottles of water have been offered as residents wait for the day when the water will again be safe. Generous financial gifts from individuals around the synod and ELCA have strengthened and extended this work.

Just beginning their second century, Salem Lutheran Church is preparing to offer expanded ministries for people who were already vulnerable from high levels of poverty and unemployment due to the departure of tens of thousands of jobs over the last few decades. These ministries will include safe water and filters, expanded visitation, communication with the media, strengthening of relevant and ongoing local partnerships, and distribution of lead mitigating foods, establishing support groups and empowering people through appropriate community organizing activities.

Lead harms the blood and cumulates in the body. No one can tell citizens in Flint when their water will again be safe. We are church. We are church together. We are Lutheran. We are church for the sake of the world. We live into being all of that as we offer support and as we stand in solidarity with Salem Lutheran Church and the people in the City of Flint.

Resolved, that the 2016 Synod Assembly expresses its gratitude to the congregations and individuals who have responded to this crisis, and requests that continued prayer, financial support, water and volunteer resources be offered to Salem Lutheran Church and its “Flint Water Crisis Task Force” as it serves the people in the City of Flint;

Resolved, that the 2016 Assembly encourages Voting Members of the Assembly to sign up for ELCA Advocacy Alerts that support resources from the U.S. government to fix the water system, support vulnerable people who have been impacted by this crisis; and,

Resolved, that the 2016 Synod Assembly encourages congregations to study and address root causes of poverty and racial disparity, in order to strengthen congregations and the members of these congregations to proclaim good news to the poor in the example of Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,

Pr. Nathan Allen, Holy Spirit, Grand Blanc
Dr. Mark Fisher, Transfiguration, Fenton
Pr. Diane Greble, St. John's Fowlerville
Pr. Sharon Huff, St. George, Brighton
Pr. Sue Lidums, Our Risen Lord, Burton
Pr. Denise Russell, All Saints, Hartland
Pr. Monica Villarreal, Salem, Flint

The Resolutions Committee recommends the adoption of this resolution.