

January 13, 2010

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

The first chaotic reports and images now are coming out of Haiti, documenting the devastation caused by yesterday's massive earthquake. Haitian officials estimate that more than a hundred thousand people may have died and that the quake destroyed major parts of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America already is responding through the Lutheran World Federation's Haiti Program. Given the devastation caused by this earthquake, the ELCA has committed an initial \$250,000 from ELCA International Disaster Response for Haiti and has authorized an additional \$500,000 as congregations respond both to the immediate needs and long-term rebuilding efforts.

We give thanks to God that LWF staff escaped injury from the earthquake. We also give thanks that we have trusted and effective partners on the ground in Haiti who already are at work helping earthquake survivors. The ELCA is the largest regular supporter of the LWF's program in Haiti, which helps communities escape the deep poverty in which so many Haitians live. Since staff is already in place, no precious time will be lost in shaping an effective response. The work of providing food and shelter and in helping people to rebuild their lives is under way.

We give thanks also for our partners in this work. The LWF staff in Haiti also was tapped to coordinate the responses of Protestant and Orthodox churches throughout the world through Action by Churches Together (ACT). In addition, the ELCA, in coordination with the Florida-Bahamas Synod, will be working to provide disaster support to and possibly through the emerging Lutheran church in Haiti.

More details of the ELCA's response and a disaster insert for congregational use are posted on www.elca.org/disaster as communication channels are restored. Please share with members and friends both the urgent need in one of the United States' closest neighbors and the effective means by which their church is responding. Please go to <http://www.elca.org/haitiearthquake> or call 800-638-3522 to give toward our response to the disaster in Haiti.

In God's grace,

Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America