

Hello, friends,

Many thanks to you all who have communicated your offers of assistance and concern following yesterday's storms and tornadoes which caused serious damage in central and southeastern Virginia. 24 hours following the events, you all are probably aware that the worst of the weather was in Suffolk, Brunswick County and Colonial Heights. Thankfully, we know of no confirmed fatalities, and most of the 200 injuries reported were minor (only a handful admitted to hospital). There was significant property damage, both to businesses and private residences. We will know more in a few days about what the impact has been on homeowners and renters.

Some of you will be participating in the VA VOAD conference call which will begin at 5:00p.m. EST, to update everyone and discuss response.

Thanks in large part to dramatic media coverage, there has been a great volume of offers of help, both locally and from around the country, to the point that the city of Suffolk, for one, is almost unable to handle it. If you or your organization would like to help, please consult the following two messages – one a link to the vaemergency website, the other guidance from one of our members on the scene, and urge others who want to help to do the same.

I think it goes without saying that the people whose lives have been impacted by these storms, and their communities, are most grateful for the outpouring of response. It will be a few more days before we know more precisely what the longer-term needs will be, but we will continue to be in touch to communicate them.

Please pass along this communication to your partners (Synod/District congregations, pastors, colleagues in disaster response, etc). We will inform you as to ongoing developments. Thanks again, so much.

1. Follow/click on this link for information on how to respond:

<http://www.vaemergency.com/newsroom/disasters/aprtornado08/donations.cfm>

2. Regarding donations, please advise your individual offices/churches/parishes etc of the following:

At this time there is NO need for donations of clothing, furniture, etc. In fact, at this time clients have no way to utilize donated items (as they have damaged homes). There is also NO place to collect, sort, store and distribute the items.

The current need is for funds. This may not be what some donors want to hear. Financial donations can be stretched further by reputable organizations and denominations, and also serves to stimulate the economy of the impacted areas. An added benefit is that clients can decide for themselves what the most useful item to suit their needs is. Please see www.vaemergency.com <http://www.nvoad.org> for a list of reputable organizations.

Large GIK donations (bulk gifts in kind) are accepted. Food items should be directed to the local Food banks.

Peace, Jan

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