



Southwestern Texas Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

February 14, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to you all. For the past several months, a team of rostered and lay leaders from across the synod and representatives from Lutheran Disaster Response have convened regularly to form a standing **Disaster Preparedness and Response Team** for the Southwestern Texas Synod. In light of the unusually severe winter storm affecting our synod, the Disaster Team has activated to provide resources and a word of support for our leaders and congregations. The conditions across the synod will vary widely, so please stay connected to local weather conditions and guidance from authorities.

Personal Safety

- If possible, stay at home and indoors. We have already received several reports of home accidents due to slipping on ice.
- If you absolutely must leave your home, dress in layers, take a blanket, flashlight, and water in your car, and check drivetexas.org for road conditions.
- Avoid any downed power lines and walking under trees weighed down with ice.
- Additional tips from the Centers for Disease Control: [Stay Safe During and After a Winter Storm](#)

Pastoral Care

- Congregational leaders are encouraged to check on members who are elderly, vulnerable, or isolated by using phone trees or other methods. The key questions to ask are: do you have electricity? Is your heater working? Do you have blankets, water, and necessary medication?
- Planning for Ash Wednesday was already challenging due to the pandemic. When determining if any in-person plans should be cancelled, please carefully consider road conditions.

Community Services and Guidance

- Check communications from your city and county, as well as police and sheriff's departments. These outlets will communicate important announcements and notify the public of any emergency shelters that are open in your area. When in doubt, call 2-1-1 for more information.
- The Electric Reliability Council of Texas anticipates sharp increases in power usage which could overwhelm the power grid. See the full article [here](#). ERCOT recommends that you:
 - Turn down your thermostat to 68 degrees



God's grace transforms and connects us to learn, to love, to lead.
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- Keep lights off when not in a room
- Unplug appliances not in use
- Avoid using large appliances like washing machines

Animal Safety Tips from the Texas Animal Health Commission:

- [Winter Storms and Your Pets](#)
- [Winter and Your Backyard Chickens](#)
- [Winter Storms and Your Livestock](#)

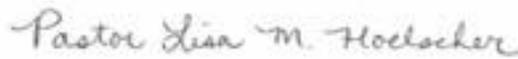
As the winter storm moves through our area, the Disaster Team and the Office of the Bishop will monitor the impacts to our congregations and rostered leaders. If your church suffers damage, please contact info@swtsynod.org. To support our response efforts, please consider donating to the SWT Disaster Fund by clicking [here](#) and putting "SWT Disaster Fund" in the memo line.

O God, the author of all creation, we see your hand in this winter storm, and we are again humbled by your power. We pray for your protection over all those who are vulnerable, especially people who are isolated and without electricity. Keep safe the first responders and healthcare workers who must venture out into the elements to care for their neighbors. Calm anxious hearts and minds, and see us through the days ahead. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Stay safe and warm,



Bishop Sue Briner
Bishop of the SWT Synod



Pastor Lisa Hoelscher,
Chair, SWT Synod Disaster Response Team