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Election year political currents sweep through our city, our state and our country three years after the terrible events of Sept. 11, 2001. Everyone seems to have a finger to point at someone to thank or blame. The September 11 Commission indicates there is plenty of blame to go around. And in truth, deep and pervasive problems persist. The tendency is to get stuck there.

But for Lutheran Disaster Response of New York, it has always been about Comfort and Renewal for the sake of the Gospel hope that sustains us. Of course we're on guard, we're aware, we have local anxieties. We're far different three years down the line from who we were on Sept. 10, 2001.

However, thanks be to God, we have found our hearts and minds and spirits opened wide in ministry to the "least of these" for the past three years -- we have experienced The Comforter. We've had to depend on the grace of God daily. We've learned how to follow Jesus. His grace is sufficient unto us.

We've been learning what it means to be the Body of Christ. As the dust and ashes of mourning are remembered on this third commemoration, we pledge never to forget. But central to our remembrance is the Body and Blood of Christ, given and shed for us. Central to our remembrance is the strength of common action on behalf of hurting humanity granted to us as the Body called to action. Central to our remembrance is the connective tissue of our common Lutheran bond. Central to our remembrance is the frailty of the human condition and our desire to leave no one behind. And central to our remembrance is the undying commitment of LDRNY to bring comfort and renewal for years to come.

May the Peace of God that passes all understanding be yours in Christ Jesus on Sept. 11, 2004.