

Siblings in Christ,

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father, and Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I welcome you to the month of August. Is it me or has this summer (year) flown by? It seems as if it was almost yesterday that the school year ended and we were heading into a relaxing season ahead of us, taking an extra few days to relax, cool down, and tend to our gardens and crops. However, this summer has been stressful and frustrating for a lot of us. We continue to pray for rains and nourishment for the crops in the fields, the browned lawns about our homes, and the wilting flowers that are outside our doors or windows.

This month I wanted you to read the thoughts and memories from my friend and colleague, Bishop Jon Anderson, about drought and the struggles some have when rains do not come.

I hope and pray that you all are well, and I look forward to seeing you at worship.

Peace be with you,

Pr. Erik

## Drought

*+Bishop Jon V. Anderson*

When a drought comes it provokes many God questions and often a spiritual struggle at least for those close to the land. The absence of rain, the destruction of crops, the anxiety about the future gets people's attention who know the Bible and Old Testament prophets. For example, there is the story of Elijah and the drought that fills up 1 Kings 17.

*Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."*

Where is God in the time of drought, behind it or working to end it? What is simply the mysterious forces of our planet earth's atmosphere? What are human beings responsible for in these odd patterns? Droughts make you ask questions of many kinds.

In our weekly check in with our Conference Ministers we talked about the drought. I asked what this group of wise pastors would recommend to congregations, ministers, and pastors as they seek to care for people in the deepening drought that is impacting the land, our crops and plants, the farmers and agribusiness people, and all of us as we are reminded that rain comes as a gift from God and does not always come.

We talked about the powerful ministry of going to visit with and listen to farmers about how they are doing as they watch their crop and livelihood threatened more deeply by the lack of rain in these days. Taking time to visit people in person or intentionally calling brings hope to a challenging time for people who live on and off the land.

As ministers are preparing prayers for worship, find ways to remember the households who are directly and indirectly impacted. Someone shared a picture of a congregation back in time that gathered to pray outside the church. They looked like farmers coming out of the field who were sitting with their pastor outside the church. Bringing our lament, our hopes, and our fears to God in this time is a gift. God wants to hear and listens to our prayers.

Help people remember their siblings in Christ. I have vivid memories of living in Texas and hearing my family talk about the terrible drought in the late 80s. Even more so I remember my parents, grandparents and uncles talk about the terrible droughts in the 30's. A book that reminds us that our environmental and farm policies matter and tells the story of this horrid time is called [The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl](#) by Timothy Egan.

With the uncertainty of inadequate rain comes the anxiety of inadequate money and loans that might not be able to be paid. I am not sure how that dimension of life looks for the many farmers and people who are connected to agribusiness by work and or as family members, but this is a tender time and it gets into my bones more every day we go without rain, the cracks open and I imagine the trees and plants groaning with stress.

Every day of our life is a critical moment. These days you can see that more obviously. As the cracks in the ground open, plants are doing what we need to do: sink our roots more deeply into the ground of our faith. It is a good time to recover your practice of reading scripture, praying for others, and doing works of love in response to the works of love we know through God's Story with humanity. These are critical days. We humbly pray, "Dear God bring seasonable rain to call your earth and your people out of this drought. God, we trust you are in this with us and will lead us out of this drought because of your gracious love."

*Gracious God, you are our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.  
Reveal your presence so that all may know your healing, hope, and love.  
As one community on earth bound together by your grace,  
inspire us to pray, serve, and help all those who suffer.*

*Sustaining God, you shower your creation with the gifts of your fruitfulness.  
Send your gifts of rain and nourishment to areas broken by drought and extreme heat.  
Wash them in your goodness so all may know of your care and love. Gracious God, you are our  
refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. reveal your presence so that all may  
know your healing, hope, and love.*

- ELCA Worship Resource