

Acts of Nature, Acts of God

By Interim Pastor Cathi Braasch

Pastor doesn't have to tell you what it's like when huge red blobs dominate the radar screen and weather alerts keep coming through, one after another, so fast that you and your cell phone can't keep up with them.

Welcome to Spring and Summer 2015, when we once again keep our eyes to the skies, the National Weather Service and The Weather Channel – even as our knees hit the ground and our prayers arise.

*Heavenly Father,
When the rains come: Let them be something between
drought and deluge, please, Lord. Straight down, soaking,
sufficient to water crops and recharge groundwater. Gentle,
please. And when the rains exceed our hopes, walk with us,
Lord, on the waters and through the floods, that we will
cling only to your Son, Jesus Christ, and not be afraid.*

But now, God's Message,
the God who made you in the first
place, Jacob, the One who got you
started, Israel:

“Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you,
called your name. You're mine.

When you're in over your head,
'll be there with you.

When you're in rough waters,
you will not go down.

When you're between a rock and a
hard place, it won't be a dead end,

Because I am God, your personal God,
The Holy of Israel, your Savior.

*Isaiah 43:1-3,
The Message Edition*

God's people of Peace know what it means to weather the storms – be they the latest devastation of this Spring's flooding and tornadoes, or be they those of a decade and generations past.

Water goes where it will go, even well beyond the boundaries of century- and multi-century flood plains, when enough rain falls in a short time. Insurance companies have a clause in their coverage to get around this, as many people learned in the days following the flood. A so-called Act of God – that's the fine-print language. Flooding from broken pipes or hoses – well, that would be covered; not so, though, those waters that fall from the skies or rush and gush out of creeks that even this 67-year-old can usually easily jump across.

But on that recent Sunday, just four days after that early-May night of flooding and latest round of tornadoes, God's people of Peace gathered in Christ's church. Our brothers and sisters in Christ gathered in other congregations in town and across the countryside, and in the temporary shelter of nursing care and assisted living centers in Hebron. We gathered to hear God's word, receive Holy Communion, to pray and give thanks that despite a few very close calls, not one human life was lost.

God's people remembered that this catastrophe was an act of nature. Rain falls on the just and the unjust. Winds blow where they will. Nature does not discriminate in its acts.

The Acts of God, however, were manifest, again and again, in God's people coming together, neighboring up for Jesus' sake. Being the church. Loving neighbors as oneself. Hugs and tears were shared, along with food, beds and bedding, roofs overhead and hard labor. Informal work crews organized as fast as needs became apparent. These are Acts of God. And they continue, even as new weather watches and warnings keep sounding on our cell phones, televisions and weather radios.

Severe storm season 2015 is in full swing. Acts of nature will continue, and Acts of God will prevail even in their midst. The words of Isaiah 43:1-3 capture a word and promise for us in this season. While not my favorite edition for most purposes, the earthy grittiness of *The Message* touches the flood-sodden soul particularly well.

The season for neighboring up in Christ is defined not by months but by faith that perseveres across the miles. While more highly populated areas continue to claim ink, column inches and airtime in much of the news media, between the lines are places like ours, places many will never hear about, let alone visit. Except – except that Peace Lutheran Church, our community and countryside have been beneficiaries of a different kind of flood. A flood of prayers, and a wave of gifts have come to us by the grace of God and generous sisters and brothers in Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). Just as Peace has supported others in their times of need, we are being upheld. All this, in order that the land may be tended, communities rebuilt, daily bread produced, and that, in it all, Christ would be made known. These are the acts of God that will prevail.

May the words of Isaiah 43 go with you through this season. May acts of nature be met with the mighty acts of God at work in you and all who trust his Son, Jesus Christ, for our livelihoods, even for life itself. After all, we have already been drowned, once and for all, in baptism into Father, +Son and Holy Spirit. And we have been raised from that flood. Amen? Amen! Talk about the greatest act of God!

In Christ,

Pastor Cathi

PS – Thank you all for the showers of blessed prayer and concern you've shared with my husband, Red, and me. He is progressing well in his inpatient rehabilitation following knee replacement surgery on May 14. Our daughter's cancer-related surgery went well, too, although more is anticipated in coming months. Brother Hank is at peace with his illness and our Lord. My Mom continues to deal with issues of aging and declining health as best she can.

Thanks so much to the people of Peace for covering well in my untimely but necessary absence. If I start listing names, I will miss someone, for sure. I continue to work on some Peace-related matters from a distance and look forward to being with you on communion Sundays until Red's recuperation is completed and he can handle his outdoor chores – hopefully by early to mid July. You have much to do in the meantime, with worship and planning for VBS, Fall Sunday School, and other routine ministry matters. It pains me to be away, especially while you are dealing with the usual plus the not-so-usual flood and storm recovery. You continue in my prayers! *Pr CB*

+ + +