

## A Prayer for Relief from the Drought

Kathleen Norris in her classic, poetic narrative, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, quotes a truthful and, this year, prophetic sentence from William C. Sherman's *Plains Folk*: "Above all, it is a land in serious need of rain." Norris then goes on in her brief, poignant chapter titled "Rain" to write:

"Until I moved to western South Dakota, I did not know about rain, that it could come too hard, too soft, too hot, too cold, too early, too late. That there could be too little at the right time, too much at the wrong time, and vice versa." (page 143)

This year, the rain has not come at all in western North and South Dakota. The latest U.S. Drought Monitor map shows nearly all of western North Dakota and northwestern South Dakota in severe or extreme drought and most of the rest of our two states in moderate drought or abnormally dry. Ranchers are selling off their cattle herds. Crops are withering; some won't even be worth harvesting. Pastures are brown and brittle; hay is scarce. The agricultural economy is crippled. Ranchers and farmers, their families and communities are anxious, stressed, losing hope.

A lament, like that of the people Jeremiah prophesized to, arises from the Dakota plains: "How long will the land mourn and the grass in the fields dry up?" (Jeremiah 12:4a, CEB)

And, so we pray:

Gracious, Holy and faithful God,

we cry out to you,

incline your ears and heart to your people.

Hear our humble request for your mercy;

pour out your grace upon your people,

and water the parched lands with rain.

We celebrate the handiwork of your creation, O God,

and pray you will restore the pastures,

revive the crops and renew our hope.

You are our shield and our strength.

Protect us and all your creatures in this season of drought,  
and grant us strength to hold fast to you in this time of stress.

We pray all of this trusting in your steadfast goodness and mercy,  
and in the powerful name of Jesus,  
in whom we have our salvation and the gift of new life.

Amen.

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