

Water and Fire:

Life in the Balance

Rev. Patrick Stephens

Third Week of Lent

Tuesday March 22

Scripture

Isaiah 54:10

For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

Reflection

Although we celebrate the beauty and life-nurturing abundance of our planet as gifts from God, we also know that the magnificence of creation can wield dangerous force. Natural disasters have always complicated humanity's relationship with both creation and the Creator. The very same water, wind, fire, stone and vast array of organisms that offer such abundance are also associated with extreme danger.

Fear of the elements is very real and appropriate. Despite our best efforts to understand and prepare, we are always vulnerable to extreme weather and other natural dangers. In some parts of scripture, fear and respect are used almost interchangeably. Perhaps it is our familiarity with the environmental dangers of our world which allows us to appreciate natural beauty. Perhaps it is also our dependence on the goodness of creation that causes us to feel such betrayal when we find ourselves vulnerable to creation's forces. It is very humbling to face danger at the hand of creation's forces.

Natural disasters can lead to extreme humanitarian emergencies. Although we may not have immediate control over such threats, we stand in awe of creation's power, and in solidarity with those who suffer.

Through their world-wide network of partners, PWRDF is there when disasters occur. rough fast-acting relief efforts we can all be part of the ministry of compassion toward those who find their lives suddenly changed by natural disasters

Prayer

O God, our heavenly Father, who by thy blessed Son hast taught us to ask our daily bread of thee: Behold, we beseech thee, the affliction of thy people, and send us a seasonable relief in this our necessity. Increase the fruits of the earth by thy heavenly benediction; and grant that we, receiving with

thankfulness thy gracious gifts, may use the same to thy glory, the relief of those who are needy, and our own comfort; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A prayer In Time of Dearth and Famine, Book of Common Prayer

When disaster calls, Naba Gurung answers

As the Humanitarian Response Coordinator for PWRDF, Naba helped lead responses to four hurricanes in the Caribbean, a drought and famine appeal in East Africa, a wildfire in British Columbia, flooding in Nepal and a mudslide in Peru. That was just 2017.

Yet Gurung says his job takes him to places and to people he never in his “wildest dreams thought of going and meeting.”

What he really loves is being a part of effecting change. In his native Nepal he had been involved in community-based international development work, then later did his Masters in International Environment and Development Studies in Norway. He arrived in Canada as a skilled immigrant intending to pursue a PhD at Western University but took an eight-month contract with PWRDF instead. Sixteen years later, he’s still here.

Because PWRDF is not an implementing agency, “we don’t do the projects ourselves,” says Gurung. “We have the office in Toronto, but our development projects happen all over the world, in countries where we have long-standing relationships, including programs in Canada itself.”

PWRDF relief projects, he says, are primarily implemented by members of the ACT Alliance, a coalition of more than 140 churches and church-related organizations that work together in more than 100 countries to create sustainable change in the lives of the poor and marginalized. “The main advantage of ACT is they are deeply rooted in the communities they serve,” says Gurung. He and other PWRDF staff are involved in setting up strategies, policies, guidelines and procedures of the Alliance.

The system is effective because of the simple chain of communication organizations on the ground, who know the context and the specific community they’re engaged in, send an alert to the regional office about who is doing what, who’s most vulnerable, most impacted. That information is then circulated to the rest of the members, including PWRDF.

Gurung works closely with the regional offices, reviewing appeals and advising where necessary. For example, ACT recently took his advice and included the emergency response work of Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza into the appeal that is responding to the treatment and care of those affected by the Gaza conflict.

Read the whole story on our website at

<https://pwrdf.org/60-stories/when-disaster-calls-naba-gurung-answers/>