

Upon the First Anniversary of the July 4 Floods

"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit."

Psalm 34:18

Dear Friends in Christ,

One year ago, devastating floodwaters changed the lives of countless people across our synod and beyond. Families lost loved ones. Homes, churches, camps, businesses, and entire communities were forever altered. Even those who were not directly affected watched with disbelief as the waters rose and the heartbreaking stories unfolded. We will never forget the lives that were lost or the neighbors whose lives were changed forever.

Anniversaries such as these stir memories that remain close to the surface. For many, grief is still fresh. For others, the work of rebuilding continues day by day. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, when one member of the body suffers, all suffer together. Throughout this past year, congregations across the Southwestern Texas Synod have prayed, served, given generously, opened their doors, and stood alongside neighbors in need. Together, we have borne witness to the compassion of Christ made visible through God's people.

The psalmist offers a promise that continues to sustain us: *"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit."* These words do not erase our sorrow, but they remind us that we never grieve alone. God meets us in our pain, walks beside us through the long journey of healing, and continues to bring hope through communities of faith that embody Christ's love.

Let us pray.

Gracious God,

Our hearts remember all who lost loved ones, homes, livelihoods, and a sense of security in the floods one year ago. We pray for those whose grief remains heavy, for first responders and caregivers, for volunteers and neighbors, and for every community still finding its way forward.

Thank you for the countless acts of compassion that have reflected your love throughout this past year. Continue to strengthen those who rebuild, comfort those who mourn, and inspire us to remain faithful companions to one another. Make your Church a living witness of hope, reminding all who suffer that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus.

Hold us together as one body, bearing one another's burdens and trusting in your promise to make all things new.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

In Christ,

Bishop Sue

This reflection is adapted, with gratitude, from an original pastoral letter written by The Rev. Lisa M. Hoelscher following the first anniversary of the July 4 floods.