

*A Pastoral Prayer in the Aftermath of the Tornadoes*  
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Mighty God

Before we can hear you speaking out of the whirlwind,  
We have to clean up the mess. This week has been five miles long  
From shock and disbelief to sadness and despair to thankfulness and relief  
And finally to comprehension and grief.

We see the destruction to places we called home and work,  
We labor to render wilderness turned into a garden,  
But the gardens were rendered into wilderness in a moment.

What were homes, business and schools now disaster zones and a mess.  
Before we can rebuild we must gather ourselves and cry.

We are full of thankfulness and full of questions.

We have scrambled and floundered and must clean up and sort through  
Our plans have shortened to a few weeks and how to get by.

There have been graces and laughter, even in these days.

We still count many blessings--first and foremost for human lives not lost  
Even amid the terrible toll of those that were.

Second, for realizing anew the preciousness of our fellowship and neighbor love,  
And third, for the grief that tells us what place and persons mean to us.

Grant us the inner strength to sorrow and get on with life.

For those shattered by loss, help and strength to know the crying will end.  
Help us to pick up pieces, clean up debris, hold up our heads  
And keep on with the work to which you called us.

I pray for us, all of us, that you strengthen us for this time.

Give us patience in abundance, resourcefulness and wisdom.

Multiply our vision and double our determination to help.

Most of all pour out love that dries flooded homes  
Wipes away tears of numb despair  
and energizes us for the work of reclamation.

We take comfort in the story of Job,

Who kept his integrity and his faith in his suffering.

He refused simplistic answers to complex questions. And so do we.

We also take solace that in his integrity he heard from you.

And you blessed him not with answers to his questions so much  
As an affirmation of his abiding trust.

We ask for faith like his for times like these.

Bless us, bless workers and firemen and policemen and women and doctors and nurses,  
volunteers and government leaders, all who come to help. Bear them up in the stressful tides  
That they might float upon them and not drown in them.

For the gift of life, the gift of community, the gift of purpose and hope, the gift of tenacity,  
For these and all your abundant gifts, we thank you and praise your name. Amen.