

DROUGHT

I have grown a lot over the over the last six months as our district has faced the most severe droughts in 50 years. I have seen and experienced the worry and concern of those I care about mount as day's pass by without rain. As crucial dates come and more stock has had to be sold because of the lack of feed and water. As the months have passed, the landscape has not only been denuded of its greenness but also the stock. Now as I move around the district there are not many animals to be seen. The impact is far reaching, it will not disappear when the rain comes, it will affect our district for the next 5 - 7 years. Not only the income of the farmers, shearers and the farm labours but also our very community structure. The rural restructuring has meant what social supports are left in the district are those that are funded by the district. Even knowing the harsh realities of the impact that this drought will have there has been a dogged determination that we can get through it. Made easier because as a community we stand together.

It has been most humbling as I have received offers of help for our district. I have had letters and phone calls offering everything from hay to fruit cakes. While no one in the district wants a handout in the form of a Government grant these very generous gifts help us to keep on battling because they show someone cares. It may not have seemed much to those that gave but to us it was like a sprinkle of rain, because we knew someone cared.

On the 15th of February we met in a paddock to support each other and to ask God to give us rain in Gods perfect timing and wisdom while we wait. We invited the churches of Blenheim to join us and were bowled over by the response. On the day there were 250 people gathered. We sang, we talked and we prayed. The next day the gathering was shown on TV and the reporter said even with the prayers the drought is not expected to break before April and there was no rain forecast for today. That afternoon I watched as clouds gathered and thought this would show that God is real, quickly checking the thought because God does not have to prove anything. When it started to rain, I asked God for « inch and then added cheekily an inch would be nice. We got 4mm, I guess God said that's enough. Two days later we got another 4mm and within the week we had received 39mm in total. Our God "rains" and though the drought might not yet be broken we thank God and continue to look to God for our needs.

It has been a humbling experience and at times I have been close to tears as I have seen the Christian church in action. The love of Christ that we have experienced through their actions challenges us to remember when others are hurting (even when they are miles away) to ask how would Christ have us respond. Blessed be the cake makers, the hay makers and those who give in so many ways for it is in your actions that Christ's Kingdom comes.