VIEW from the PEW

It has been a long hot summer and as this is being written in late August the rains have started to come, and the grass is beginning to turn green again. Walking my dog Bandit almost every conversation in recent weeks has been 'how dry it is and will the rains ever come ?' Perhaps this is a reminder that for millions of people around the world especially in Biblical lands, rain or the coming of the rains is the most important event in their lives. The people of Israel talked about the first and the second rains – both, especially the latter being a sign of God's blessing.

During September and October, we will be celebrating Harvest Supper in our village halls and sing the much-loved harvest hymns at the Harvest Festival Services. Maybe this year we will be more aware than ever before in our lifetime how dependent we are on forces outside our control – that modern society with all its technological advances, is still at the mercy of much greater forces – whether it's global warming, El Niño or the forces of nature generally.

For our ancestors this was much more of an everyday reality. A lovely tradition in our villages is that when the last of the harvest was brought in, the most senior farmhand, sitting on top of the hay wagon would shout " Harvest Home". Was this not a cry of thankfulness to God that for another year there would be food for all, and no need to fear want or famine?

So as we experience forces of nature well outside our control, let us all pray that the farmers will be able to sow their autumn and spring seeds, so that there will be enough food this winter for their livestock and around the world particularly in the most vulnerable places there will be enough food for all.

Let us be grateful that our country is normally spared the worst excesses of drought and severe storms – but let the past year and the years to come be a humble reminder to quote an old saying 'Man can labour but God gives the increase'

Ian Willis