



BRITISH COLUMBIA CONFERENCE

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

Dear Friends in BC Conference,

This weekend has marked the most extraordinary set of circumstances with regard to fires in the interior of our province for more than a decade. Hot weather, dry lightning, high winds, and human activity have all conspired to endanger many people in many parts of our province due to the huge spread of fire through dry tinder.

Many of our congregations are ministering right in the heart of the threatened and enflamed territory. Some of our people are among those evacuated from their homes, and others are among those who seek to support and house those who have been evacuated. And meanwhile, the fires keep on starting (97 new fires on Saturday alone) and spreading.

At a time like this, when fear, anxiety, loss and dislocation trouble the hearts of many of our neighbours (and ourselves) in BC Conference, we turn to prayer, we turn to Scripture, and we turn to each other.

We pray for the communities on evacuation order in both the Cariboo and the Kamloops-Okanagan Presbyteries: from Ashcroft (including the reserve there), Cache Creek, Princeton, Williams Lake and the 100 Mile House area.

We pray for the nearly 2,000 people who are fighting the fires around the clock, and give thanks for the reinforcements who will be arriving from across Canada early this week.

We pray for the elderly and the very young, and all those whose health and respiration is threatened by the quality of the air in much of the interior of our province.

We pray for all those who have heard the call to reach out to those who are evacuated, to welcome them into temporary lodgings with hospitality and compassion.

And we remember the words of Isaiah 43:2 *"When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you,"* giving thanks that so far, there has been no loss of life related to the wildfires in our province.

And we turn toward each other... if you are impacted by the fires, or if you want to make a difference for someone else who is, please reach out to those local agencies providing support on the ground. Jesus, in his parable, said, *"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing."* (Matthew 25:35). Now is a time when we need to recognize in each person a beloved child of God, and receive each other with that same spirit of compassion.

As we travel through the weeks to come, may we be rooted in our identity as beloved children of God, and show that same love to all we encounter, in Jesus' name.

Grace and peace to you,

Cari Copeman-Haynes
President, BCC

Healthy Communities of Faith and Ministries Effective Leadership Faithful Public Witness