



July – August 2016 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

As I am preparing this month's message I am keenly aware that it is just over one month since the evacuation of the city of Fort McMurray.

We live in the wake of unbelievable devastation; and, in the wake of incredible generosity.

We live with the reality that many have no home to call home; and, that thousands more are returning to see what they will find.

With you, I give thanks to God for the generosity of those from our own communities, province, nation, and indeed, from around the world, in providing for evacuees, for the safety of the emergency crews and first responders, and for all who continue to coordinate and to plan at every level.

I know that you will continue to hold the people of Fort McMurray in your prayers. Many remain displaced. Many know uncertainty. There are various forms of trauma.

I know that you will continue to welcome those who join you for worship.

On a recent Saturday afternoon (May 28) many of you know that Cathy and I journeyed just outside of Rochester (south of Athabasca) to join Pastor Susan and Cliff Horton and many current and former members of Christ the King Lutheran. What an amazing gathering filled with joy, thanksgiving, gratitude, pain, tears, baptism, eucharist, shared meal and farewell and thanksgiving for the ministry of Pastor Susan and Cliff who are beginning their planned retirement. The congregation continues conversation begun with St. Thomas Anglican and with the Diocese and ABT Synod about shared ministry in Ft. McMurray. It was a gift to worship together, to hear the stories – the experiences, the shared loss and hope.

As you are aware, through the ABT Synod – Special Bulletins and *Wednesday's Word*: update, conversation and regular communication continues with CLWR, LC-C and the ELCIC through our Synod. Church groups and congregations in Alberta are invited to apply for funds for programs they feel will benefit the congregations and people of Fort McMurray from the CLWR Emergency Fund. **Grant application forms and further details are available from our Synod Office.** I am thankful for the shared work of CLWR, LC-C and our Synod.

Recently denominational leaders met via conference call – Toronto, Edmonton, Asia, Ft. McMurray – Anglican Church of Canada, Salvation Army, United Church of Canada, Mennonite, ELCIC, and others I have forgotten – to share the response and work of each to this devastation. From that conference call it was decided that a more local conversation of denominational leaders should take place to coordinate responses, plan collaboratively and share resources. Again, I am thankful for the opportunity to be in partnership together and to participate in this conversation.

Dear sisters and brothers. There will be further updates to our Synod. We know that as the days go by, other events will begin to dominate media reports and people's attention. This is when we will be needed the most to walk with and support our sisters and brothers.

We continue to pray: *Our Lord and God, grant us grace to know your love in whatever we face. Give us patience and thankfulness, even in our pain, anxiety or loss; and move us with compassion and tenderness for our afflicted neighbours; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen* (Recovering from Trauma, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*; Pastoral Care, pg. 188).

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

In Christ Jesus –
Shalom,
+Larry

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Spirit -Led Leadership - Hope-Filled Discipleship - Innovative Tradition - Collaborative Partnerships