

Prayers for Hope Arising from the Ashes



A booklet of prayers of hope for persons experiencing the Fort McMurray Fire, 2016

ELCIC Synod of Alberta and the Territories, Congregational Action and Response for Mental Health (CARE) Ministry Team. www.alberta.synod.ca/ministries/c-a-r-e

This booklet of short prayers is sent to all persons in the community of Fort McMurray who have experienced the fire in May, 2016. The Congregational Action and Response for Mental Health (CARE) Ministry Team of the ELCIC Synod of Alberta and the Territories has collected the prayers into the booklet **Prayers of Hope Arising from the Ashes** for persons who have experienced the fires in Fort McMurray and especially for our Lutheran friends at Christ the King Lutheran Church.

We are aware that the recovery from this trauma will be a long process. There will be daily reminders of losses and struggles to regain a sense of hope. The CARE Ministry team continues to provide resources related to mental health in faith communities on its section of the ELCIC Synod of Alberta and the Territories webpage.

www.albertasynod.ca/ministries/c-a-r-e

Litany for the aftermath of the Fort McMurray fires.

(Reverend Keith Loewen, Calgary, May 30, 2016)

Leader: Creator, after a monumental struggle, we come to you seeking energy and faith.

Gathering: After the fiery chaos in our lives that threatened what we hold dear, we are in shock and we grieve.

L: At the same time we are grateful and encouraged.

G: We have lost much, but still have each other.

L: We are weary but strengthened by your love through the good will of others.

G: We pray that you will give us strength and perception through the support of our neighbours, friends and loved ones, even as we mourn what we have lost.

L: As time goes on and we work our way through the turmoil of the fire's aftermath, we pray for your spirit of hope and peace.

All: Creator, we pray in your loving name, amen.

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A Basket of Thanks

Dear Lord,

Today I am filling a basket with the thanks I have for the blessings I have received during the time since the fire.

Thank you for sustaining me when I couldn't see a way out of the fire,

Thank you for the courage to drive through flames and know you were with me,

Thank you for the person who brought me gas when my car was on empty,

Thank you for the warm welcome I received from so many people,

Thank you for the gifts of love and encouragement I received when I was at my lowest,

Thank you for the unexpected generosity of people I didn't even know,

Thank you for the continuous reminders that in YOU everything is possible.

Amen.

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God of compassion, we give you thanks for your presence with all in the community of Fort McMurray, and with all those across the province, this great nation and around the globe who have responded to the call for help. We remain awed by the miracle of the evacuation, when all escaped safely with no loss of life. Through the kindness and welcome of strangers, You have comforted those who have walked in the valley of shadows since being forced from their homes. Now, as the community begins to re-gather and return, we pray and give thanks for your promised continued presence and comfort. You have not left or forsaken any one of the people of Fort McMurray. All are carved on the palms of your hands. Send your Spirit to again blow through the community, that homecomings may be as safe as the leaving taking was.

As the difficult work of rebuilding begins, grant courage and perseverance to all in their pilgrimage home, infusing all with your peace. Grant weary community and provincial leaders new energy and hope for the long journey ahead; grant to all wisdom and discernment, patience, tolerance and humour when the work seems just too much to accomplish. Eliminate political barriers that hinder rebuilding, wherever they emerge. We pray for healing of mind, body and spirit for all, and for healing of the community of Fort McMurray. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

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Blessing of A Home After a Fire

For many families in Fort McMurray the dwelling they have lived in is no longer there. For others, the dwelling is damaged and must be rebuilt or repaired.

Families have lost that dwelling and the many things that are associated with it. They will be rebuilding their lives in a new space.

Home is more than a dwelling place or structure for us all. It has deeper meaning to us as a place of safety and sanctuary.

As the family gathers back in a house that has been vacated or damaged by fire, or in a new temporary dwelling while a structure is being re-built this can be a time to share a service of blessing of this "new" home.

This can be a time of new beginnings and renewed hope even if a house was not totally destroyed. While many things may have been lost, returning "home" and being together in a shared space is a chance to regain some sense of peace and hope. Blessing a household has been an ancient practice of Christian and many other religions.

Gather the family group together in one room. You may light a candle to begin the blessing. As you move into each room ask one person to offer a brief prayer for that room. These prayers can be very simple so that everyone can participate. These are some examples.

May your Holy Spirit flow through the persons who live in this room

Thank you for letting me come back to my own bed

May God watch over those who sleep in this room

In the name of Jesus Christ I ask that peace and joy be in this room

May God keep us all safe as we live in this home

Keep love growing in this home

Thank you for helping us remember that our home is more than the things in it

The kitchen is a special place to nourish our bodies and our minds. Let us gather there with joy and a willingness to share with each other.

End the blessing with a scripture passage or a prayer.

Proverbs 24:3-4 "By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches."

Numbers 6:24-26 "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

Luke 10:5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!'

Dear Lord,

We thank you for being able to return “home” to this place. May we be able to make this dwelling a place of peace and comfort for us all. We ask that you guide us in doing things for each other that will make our home be filled with love and concern for others rather than just ourselves.

Amen

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A Prayer for Thinking About Lost Things

(Dr. Dianne Kieren ELCIC Synod of Alberta Congregational Action and Response for Mental Health Ministry Team: CARE)

Dear Lord,

Today I was sad as I thought about the things that were lost in the fire,

My photos, my favourite shoes, my books, my clothes,

The list was so long and it was endless.

How will I ever regain all of those things that were a part of my life before the fire?

How can I start all over again?

How will I have the strength and courage to move forward?

Then I looked outside at the sunset that was glowing in the sky and I realized that I was not alone --
- you are with me. You allow me to grieve even the little things that are so unimportant to my life as a whole. You give me the hope that I will never be alone as I face these losses.

Thank you God for being with me and hearing me even when I cannot see forward even a step. You have strengthened me on this journey and I know you will be with me. Help me celebrate each day with hope for the future.

Psalm 4:8 **In peace I will lie down and sleep**, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Amen

Prayers from delegates to the 2016 ELCIC Synod of Alberta and the Territories Convention held at Camrose, June, 2016

Dear Lord,

We pray that God will give you the strength to cope with the present and gain the power to renew your lives and your homes.

Amen

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Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In the days and months ahead, in the changes and transitions to come, may you hope in the Lord, rise up on wings like eagles, run and not grow weary, walk and not faint. Amen!

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Dear Lord,

While our economy gives and then takes possibilities, and our structures and possessions give us a foundation for our communities and lives, God help us also now to remember there is no life separate from You and with You all worthy things are possible.

Amen

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Dear Lord,

I can't imagine the feelings of disorientation and up rootedness that this disaster would lead to. My prayer is that the loving arms of Jesus will surround you and that you will feel his presence wherever you are.

Amen

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Cherish today, struggles may change direction without notice – in this moment let all people reach out and take one another's hand.

Amen

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Loving God,

God of compassion and mercy, be with and comfort the people of Fort McMurray and area, all of whom have suffered mental as well as physical trauma. Guide and support all caregivers, who seek to help distressed people be healed.

Amen

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God who listens to our longings ...

Fears... and anxiousness to respond to our neighbour's needs,

Help us listen ... as you do ...

to struggles, stories and yet also to the immense HOPE,

Lead us to respond appropriately, ... in dialogue with Fort McMurray friends.

Walk with us as we pray and walk with our Lutheran northerners.

May we discover how to continue this mutual journey ...

as you lead.

As your Son gently holds all in the many days ahead....

assist us to be ever thankful for your presence that refuses to ever let our friends go and teaches us what fellowship truly means.

Amen

From Lakeland Lutheran Church, Cold Lake, AB

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Heavenly Father,

To you be all praise, glory and honour. You reign in mercy and power. Grant to the people of Fort Mc Murray your strength and peace and courage to live each day in your presence. In Jesus name. AMEN

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In God everything old will pass away. He will replace it with a new world, clear and pure. A new beginning in the lives of so many devastated by the fires is emerging. Embrace the winds of change, putting your faith into the hands of Christ Jesus who is steadfast in his love. Amen

Janice Neuman, Thorsby, Alberta

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Dear Friends in Christ,

We continue to pray for all the people in your town, region, all those who have been displaced, all those who work so hard to “normalize” life of everyone who has been changed since your tragic fire in May. We pray that help will remain ongoing and that with God’s love and guidance life will be restored over time.

God Bless you, Keep you and encourage you.!

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Dear Lord,

We pray that the crucible of fire which you have experienced, form you and shape you into a stronger community.

Amen

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