



St. James Lutheran Church

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God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a letter I have never wanted to write. Last week, a wildfire began near the Carr Powerhouse at the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area. By Thursday morning the Carr Fire had burned through the nearby town of Old Shasta, and by Friday it had destroyed the town of Keswick and entered the City of Redding. As of today, July 31st, the fire is as large as the city of New Orleans and has entered Trinity County to the west. The sky has a smoky orange glow that adds to the feeling of unreality. Over 38,000 people in the region have been evacuated from their homes. Many are now managing to return, but thousands have found that their homes are severely damaged or completely gone. Our community mourns the tragic deaths of six people, including two young children.

Here at St. James Lutheran Church in Redding, we are doing what we can to help to ease the suffering of others in the midst of this tragedy. We have established a day center in our building for children affected by the fire, offering food and water, clothing, and activities, with shuttles bringing them to and from established Red Cross shelters. Members of our congregation are directly assisting the Red Cross relief efforts and connecting with other local organizations.

I am writing to ask for your support as we seek to address the immediate and long-term needs of the victims of the Carr Fire. Please consider helping in these ways:

- Pray for the people of Shasta and Trinity counties: Pray for people who have lost everything and for people who must adapt to new circumstances; pray for renewed strength for the thousands of volunteers who have been working tirelessly on relief efforts and who will continue to give of themselves on behalf of others for weeks and months to come; pray for the safety of emergency responders who continue to battle fires in the Redding area and across the western United States.
- Give blood: Blood donation always slows down during the busy summer months, but right now is when the victims of fire need it!
- Provide financial support: We at St. James are accepting donations for people in the community whose needs may not be addressed by ongoing relief efforts. Donations can be made online at www.stjamesca.com by clicking our "Donate" button and designating your gift to Evangelism/Mission. You may also mail gifts to the church with the designation "Good Samaritan Fund." Monetary donations can also be directed to Lutheran Disaster Response (<https://community.elca.org/uswildfires>) or Lutheran Social Services of Northern California (<https://www.lssnorcal.org/get-involved/give/>).

In addition to these, I humbly request that your church leadership consider including gifts to one or more of these organizations in next year's budget as we are beginning to plan for the reality of long-term recovery.

Even in the midst of tragedy and sorrow – all honor and glory to God, blessed and Holy Trinity, forever and ever.

With resurrection hope,

Pastor Bob

Pastor Bob Swartz