Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,



“When you walk through the fire you will not be burned, and the flame will not consume you” promised the Lord in Isaiah 43:2 for those who trust in him. This past weekend, fires burned in several places in Washington near Yakima, in North Central Washington, and in Spokane. One of our Northwest District pastors lost his home to the fire near Yakima. In the Spokane Complex Fires alone, more than 60,000 people have been evacuated from the north side of Spokane and more than 600 structures have burned (homes, businesses, etc.).

Doug Wagley, the pastor of New Vision Lutheran in North Spokane, reported that flames could be seen from the church property, but by God’s grace, firefighters have protected that neighborhood and the church.

Pilgrim Lutheran and Holy Cross Lutheran, both on the edge of the evacuation zone, reported that members are reaching out to other members who have been evacuated, some of whom have lost homes. Most of those under evacuation are still waiting for the ability to return home.

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church on the South Hill is held a prayer service for the community on Wednesday, August 5 to seek the grace of our God for all the firefighters, first responders, people in evacuation, and for those who have lost homes.

Comfort Dog ministries at Redeemer Lutheran in Spokane Valley and Christ the King Lutheran in neighboring Coeur d’Alene have allowed God’s people to bring prayer and words of comfort in Christ to evacuees at emergency shelters set up in Spokane.

As fires are still burning and evacuation orders are still in place, it is too early to know who in these communities will be dealing with long-term impacts from these fires; yet we do know for sure who the one who saves is. The Lord goes on in Isaiah 43:3 to say, “for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

Many across the NOW District would like to contribute in some way to care for those caught in these evacuations and who have experienced loss in these fires. Here are a few thoughts about how you can help:

Pray to the Lord our God, the Holy One of Israel, through our Savior Jesus Christ for favorable weather, protection for the firefighters, preservation of homes, restoration for those experiencing loss, and for all those agencies on the front lines of emergency response.

Give towards the fire recovery efforts through community relief organizations which are providing housing and food for evacuees.

Give towards our NOW LCMS Disaster Relief Fund here (also found by clicking the 'Donate' button on nowlcms.org - be sure to use the drop-down menu and choose NOW LCMS Disaster Relief Fund). These funds will be shared with our congregations in affected areas to use to care for those impacted by disasters like these so our congregations can offer such things as gift cards, help pay for temporary housing expenses, provide tangible items for those in need, and more, as a practical expression of the love of Jesus.

We are not collecting physical items, clothing, or food, but you may consider giving those items to food banks and mission organizations in your area.

Join me in this prayer to our Lord:

> Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are the Holy One of Israel. All nature responds to you. Bring an end to these fires, guard and sustain those first responders who seek to quench the flames, protect the property and livelihoods of all those who have been evacuated, and restore those who have experienced loss. Thank you that injury and loss of life have been minimal in this disaster, and more importantly, thank you for giving us your gift of new and eternal life in Christ. Use the members of our NOW District congregations to care for people hurting in our community so that hearts may be turned to the true hope of life found only in you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

In Jesus,

Rev. Dr. Michael Von Behren
Northwest District President

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