



July 29, 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

People across the country have been watching the news of the forest fires in Alberta and praying for the safety and well-being of the residents, business owners, and visitors to Jasper. We have been amazed by the commitment of the firefighters, encouraged by the assistance provided by neighbouring communities, and astonished by the resilience and determination of the people of Jasper.

Nonetheless, I wanted to reach out to the churches of Jasper to acknowledge how very difficult this situation must be for you. Seeing the pictures of St. Mary and St. George Anglican Church burning and then destroyed pointed out the severe impact on congregations in addition to families and businesses. I have also heard that Jasper United Church burned down, and I am sure that every worshipping community in Jasper has been impacted in significant ways.

I expect that the pastors and church leaders of Jasper will be busy these days, attending to the pastoral and practical needs of your parishioners and other community members. At the same time, you and your family members will have similar needs for care and support. I encourage you to be mindful of your own needs and be willing to ask for help from each other, your colleagues in neighbouring communities, denominational staff, and others who will walk with you through this difficult time.

Most importantly, remember the assurance of the Prophet Isaiah that when God's people go through trials and suffering, God will not abandon us:

But now thus says the Lord,

he who created you, O Jacob,

he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

² *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;*

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

and the flame shall not consume you. (Isaiah 43:1-2)

Remember that you are not alone in these days. God is with you, and your siblings in Christ in The Canadian Council of Churches are holding you in our prayers. We are praying for you and your families, for your community, and for your ongoing ministries in Jesus' name.

Sincerely,

Rev. Amanda Currie

President, The Canadian Council of Churches