

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Like many of you, I have been surprised and saddened by the expansion of the massive wildfires in the Western United States in recent days. What I had heard about, at first, were wildfires in California. Then the wildfires began to move to other states. At present, "(n)early 200 wildfires across nine western states are burning" (ABC News, September 9, 2020). On a television news report yesterday, climate change and high winds were cited as two reasons for the extensive destruction.

At this time, I would like to encourage us to pray for the many persons affected by the wildfires. There are the individuals and families who have had to leave (perhaps even, flee) their homes. There are those who were camping who needed to be air lifted out of the path of the wildfire. There are those who have been called in to help--firefighters, EMT's, paramedics, nurses, doctors, National Guard troops, police officers, sheriffs, deputies, search and rescue personnel, Salvation Army workers and Red Cross volunteers, as well as others. Many of these individuals are first (or second) responders who are putting their lives in danger to save others.

While many have lost all that they own, those with faith in God have not lost everything. God helps them through the assistance of other human beings. God continues to help them "through fi'ry trials," as we hear in the hymn, "How Firm a Foundation."

How firm a foundation, O saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith in Christ Jesus, the Word!
What more can he say than to you he has said
who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?

"Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dismayed,
for I am your God and will still give you aid;
I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand
upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand."

"When through fi'ry trials your pathway shall lie,
my grace, all sufficient, shall be your supply.
The flames shall not hurt you; I only design
your dross to consume and your gold to refine."

"Throughout all their lifetime my people shall prove
my sov'reign, eternal, unchangeable love;
and then, when gray hairs shall their temples adorn,
like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne."

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 796)

Peace,

Pastor Cathy