

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd, protector of the flock.

Today my heart goes out to those in our synod and region who are suffering from wildfire. Unprecedented conditions have merged to bring a conflagration to our neighbors, our synod. Our hearts, my heart, breaks to see homes on fire and our wild-land aflame. We love this home in the West, but it is burning today.

I ask for prayers for our pastors in Chelan, in Wenatchee, East Wenatchee, in Orofino/Kamiah and across our wonderful country, the deep West, the land of imagination and open spaces. Tonight we watch our land burn, helpless to know how to intervene with fire, paradoxically a sign of the Holy Spirit of God.

But the deepest contest is not creation against fire. No, the deepest contest is fear against trust.

Do you know the term “vanishing point” from your earliest art classes? It’s the notion that an artist draws/paints with a necessary perspective, the way the eyes see and the brain interprets. This notion teaches artists to draw a picture with a focal point deep in the frame, where otherwise separate and parallel lines converge. The practical effect is that each dimension of an image must account for this deeper perspective.

I propose that we visualize this point in the deep background as God, the place of deepest trust. To imagine in this way insists that all the foreground confusion, all the middle ground despair, is finally brought to focus in a single spot of trust, God our Creator and Jesus the beginning of the New Creation (2 Cor 5:17).

This is one way to think of our deepest trust and it offers an ultimate counterpoint to fear, fear in the foreground for sure, but a deep confidence that ultimately everything coheres—is brought into focus--in God.

And so we address the present and send our gifts to those who are in immediate peril, for relief of suffering. We commit ourselves to the mid-term, when first gifts run dry because more immediate needs demand focus, and we invest ourselves in the deepest vision of God, a new creation—even the product of refining fire—our ultimate focal point, our trust.

Our pastor, Paul Palumbo, (Lake Chelan Lutheran Church) is in the midst of a community and county on fire. Along with Pr. Gail Hart (Ascension, Orofino, and Faith, Kamiah) whose own rural home is threatened, we are leveraged out into danger, for our communities, for our congregational families, and for members as exhaustion looms. The Holden volunteer community waits in exile at Celebration, Wenatchee (Pastors Dave Haven and Misael Fajardo),

and community members are keeping them well supplied with food but they yearn to be back in the Village and reengage in ministry together.

Please be generous as you are able for our family and friends in need. Please stay focused and aware as the first passionate responses wane, and please invest yourselves for the long-term in the vision of renewal of Life which is the ultimate goal of our God. This is our mission as a church, in a season of fire, and in seasons of ordinary time.

We are not afraid. We have what we need from Jesus to know where our ultimate trust resides. This fire is not the end. We look, in confidence, for how it might be a new beginning.

Beyond these fires, this trust is the ultimate vision of our Church.

God bless and keep you all,
+Bishop Martin Wells

Electronic donations may be made at www.ewaidssynod.org.

To send a contribution through your congregational offering mark your checks for “Northwest Fires” and your treasurer will send in your gift with your regular Mission Support, our gifts for the regional, national, and global mission of our Church.

*I invite you to read this in church or post it in newsletters or on your websites as a way to draw our community into support for one another, especially those in need.