



BC Synod Climate Justice Action Group

Communiqué – December 2024

Climate Justice, Wildfires, and the Church

The Church has a moral and Christ-centered responsibility to be concerned about wildfires because they point to broader environmental injustices that affect vulnerable Canadians. The increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires are linked to climate change and is driven largely by human activities such as fossil fuel consumption and deforestation. Indigenous communities, who contribute minimally to global carbon emissions, bear a disproportionate burden of climate change impacts due to their close relationship with their traditional territories that are often located in remote, forested areas. Wildfires can threaten their homes, livelihoods, and cultural heritage sites, disrupting traditional practices like hunting, fishing, and food gathering. Moreover, the smoke from wildfires can worsen air quality, affecting respiratory health, which is already a concern among indigenous populations due to pre-existing vulnerabilities. Additionally, the destruction of forests alters ecosystems crucial for indigenous peoples' subsistence and spiritual practices. Displacement caused by wildfires can also exacerbate existing social and economic challenges within these communities, creating long-term impacts on health, housing, and community resilience.

Churches committed to principles of social justice and stewardship of God's creation have a moral imperative to support indigenous communities affected by wildfires, through advocacy, humanitarian aid, and efforts to address the root causes of climate change. By standing in solidarity with indigenous peoples, churches can amplify voices calling for climate action, promote sustainable environmental practices, and contribute to a more just and equitable response to the climate crisis. By advocating for policies and practices that mitigate climate change and support affected communities, churches can actively contribute to a more just and sustainable world, ensuring that people that are most affected are treated with dignity and compassion in the face of environmental crises.

We pray for communities affected by climate disasters and pray that as a church, Lutherans may further God's plan of redemption for all of creation.

For an excellent presentation on the impact of wildfires in Canada, stream John Vaillant's presentation about his recent book, "Fire Weather." You will find the presentation at minutes 55:40 to 1:19:35 of the following link, the accompanying question period at 1:28:10 to 1:32:30, and the conclusion at 1:52:50 to 1:54:30:

<https://sierraclub.bc.ca/turning-down-the-heat-solutions-in-a-new-era-of-wildfire/>

USEFUL TIPS

Wildfire prevention and you

As wildfires continue to pose a heightened risk across British Columbia, churchgoers are encouraged to take proactive steps to safeguard their homes, church buildings, and communities. The provincial government recommends several measures to "fireproof" residences.

Firstly, ensure homes are equipped with fire-resistant roofing materials such as metal, asphalt, or tile. Clearing gutters and roofs of debris like dry leaves and branches is crucial to prevent ember ignition. Creating defensible spaces around homes by maintaining a vegetation-free zone of at least 10 meters can also help inhibit fire spread. Keeping combustible materials such as firewood piles and propane tanks at a safe distance from buildings is essential.

If a fire risk is imminent, stay informed about local alerts and evacuation plans. By taking proactive steps and staying vigilant, you can play a crucial role in minimizing the impact of wildfires on your home and neighbourhood.

For more detailed guidance, consult the **BC Wildfire Preparedness Guide** at <https://bit.ly/466FG6K>