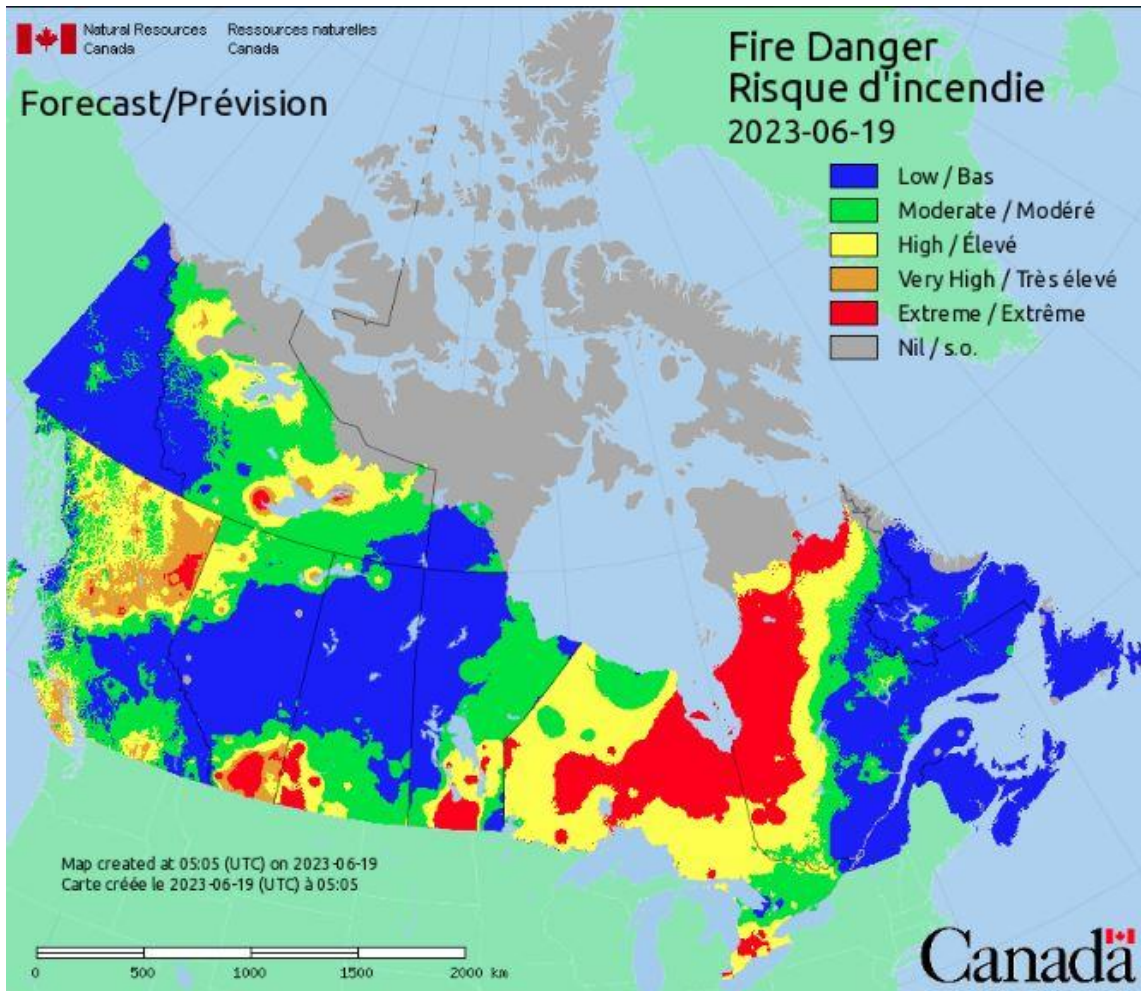


## ST. PHILIP'S MILFORD PRAYER CIRCLE



## Prayers for our Country Affected by Wildfires

**Thursday, June 22, 2023**

As an element, fire has mixed symbolism because it represents energy, which can be helpful when controlled, but volatile if left unchecked. As of June 19, there were 385 active wildfires burning in Canada, with more than 5.4 million acres burned, according to the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre. In Genesis 19, God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah with a rain of fire and brimstone, and in Deuteronomy 29, the Israelites are warned that the same punishment would fall upon them should they abandon their covenant with God. I say this, because I can only imagine the people who have lost loved ones, lost livelihoods, lost their homes, their neighbourhoods, might feel they are experiencing the wrath of God. We know this is not true – God is not raining fire down on us, we, our ancestors, our willful desire and yes,

even ignorance, has brought us to this place. So let us pray for our country affected by wildfires, and the wisdom to learn from these tragedies.

**NEW READER: As we gather our hearts and minds in prayer, we give thanks for our Lord:**

God of all creation, all the elements belong to you.  
The earth, air, water and fire are yours to command.  
You guarded your people Israel by night with a pillar of flame.  
You sanctified the early church with tongues of fire at Pentecost.  
You appeared to Moses in the burning bush, which was engulfed but not consumed.  
Restore our land, our homes, our faith in your goodness,  
And show us again how you bring life out of ash and dust.  
Give us the resources and strength, we ask, to rebuild and replant, and show us that you are the loving Creator and Saviour

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER: So let us begin with a reading from Deuteronomy 29 beginning at verse 22:**

The next generation, your children who rise up after you, as well as the foreigner who comes from a distant country, will see the devastation of that land and the afflictions with which the LORD has afflicted it— all its soil burned out by sulfur and salt, nothing planted, nothing sprouting, unable to support any vegetation, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the LORD destroyed in his fierce anger— they and indeed all the nations will wonder, *'Why has the LORD done thus to this land? What caused this great display of anger?'* They will conclude, *'It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. They turned and served other gods, worshiping them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them; so the anger of the LORD was kindled against that land, bringing on it every curse written in this book. The LORD uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath and cast them into another land, as is now the case.'* The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to observe all the words of this law.

This is the word of the Lord

**ALL: Thanks be to God.**

**NEW READER: The Psalm today is 104, God the Creator and Provider. We will read each verse in the round:**

<sup>1</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul.

O LORD my God, you are very great.

You are clothed with honor and majesty,  
<sup>2</sup> wrapped in light as with a garment.  
You stretch out the heavens like a tent;  
<sup>3</sup> you set the beams of your chambers on the waters;  
you make the clouds your chariot;  
you ride on the wings of the wind;  
<sup>4</sup> you make the winds your messengers,  
fire and flame your ministers.  
<sup>5</sup> You set the earth on its foundations,  
so that it shall never be shaken.  
<sup>6</sup> You cover it with the deep as with a garment;  
the waters stood above the mountains.  
<sup>7</sup> At your rebuke they flee;  
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.  
<sup>8</sup> They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys,  
to the place that you appointed for them.  
<sup>9</sup> You set a boundary that they may not pass,  
so that they might not again cover the earth.  
<sup>10</sup> You make springs gush forth in the valleys;  
they flow between the hills,  
<sup>11</sup> giving drink to every wild animal;  
the wild asses quench their thirst.  
<sup>12</sup> By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;  
they sing among the branches.  
<sup>13</sup> From your lofty abode you water the mountains;  
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.  
<sup>14</sup> You cause the grass to grow for the cattle  
and plants for people to cultivate,  
to bring forth food from the earth  
<sup>15</sup> and wine to gladden the human heart,  
oil to make the face shine  
and bread to strengthen the human heart.  
<sup>16</sup> The trees of the field are watered abundantly,  
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.  
<sup>17</sup> In them the birds build their nests;  
the stork has its home in the fir trees.  
<sup>18</sup> The high mountains are for the wild goats;  
the rocks are a refuge for the coney.  
<sup>19</sup> You have made the moon to mark the seasons;  
the sun knows its time for setting.  
<sup>20</sup> You make darkness, and it is night,  
when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.

<sup>21</sup> The young lions roar for their prey,  
seeking their food from God.

<sup>22</sup> When the sun rises, they withdraw  
and lie down in their dens.

<sup>23</sup> People go out to their work  
and to their labor until the evening.

**ALL: Oh God of eternal light, heaven and earth are the work of your hands, and all creation sings your praise and beauty. As in the beginning, by your Spirit, you gave life and order to all that is, so by the same Spirit redeem us and all things, through Christ our Lord and Saviour. AMEN**

**NEW READER: Our New Testament Reading is from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to Peter, beginning at the 8<sup>th</sup> verse:**

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and destroyed and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

This is the word of the Lord

**ALL: Thanks be to God.**

**NEW READER: We uphold to you Lord in prayer, the places in Canada with active wildfires:**

Lord, we pray to you for control and suppression of the fires in Québec. Numerous forest fires are forcing thousands of evacuations in several regions of Québec and are threatening essential infrastructure. The resulting smoke is also compromising the health of individuals, especially at-risk populations. The Society for the Protection of Forests, is fighting a high number of fires, especially in the following Québec regions: Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Côte-Nord, Mauricie and Nord-du-Québec.

**NEW READER:** Lord, we pray to you for control and suppression of the fires in Saskatchewan: Fire 23BN-VERMETTE is southwest of Dillon, Fire 23LX-SHAW is between Buffalo Narrows and Ile-A-La Crosse, and Fire 23LA-WISTIGO is southeast of Pinehouse Lake.

**NEW READER:** Lord, we pray to you for control and suppression of the fires in Alberta: Fire HWF064 in Zama City, Fire SWF057 in Grizzley Complex, Fire LWF148 in Pony Creek, Fire HWF058 in the town of Rainbow Lake and the Dene Tha' First Nation, the BC/Alberta Border Fire at Peavine Creek, Fire GCX002 at the Boone Lake Complex, Fire MWF025 at Rockey River, Fire GWF018 at Cecil, Fire HWF030 at Paskwa, Fire WCU001/002, EWF035 at the Sturgeon Lake Complex, Fires WWF023, GWF027, GWF040 at the Eagle Complex, Fires EWF031/039, RWF034/040 at the Pembina Complex, and Fire HWF036 at Long Lake.

**NEW READER:** Lord, we pray to you for control and suppression of the fires in British Columbia: Fire G70645 at West Kiskatinaw River, Fire G70644 at Peavine Creek, Fire G80280 at Donnie Creek, Fire V70600 at Cameron Bluffs.

**NEW READER:** And Lord, we pray to you for control and suppression of Fire FS001-23 in Northwest Territories, south of Sambaa K'e.

Lord, we uphold to you in prayer, all those affected by the wildfires throughout Canada, have mercy on them and keep them safe from harm. For those in the affected areas, their loved ones, neighbors, friends, pets and livestock, grant that they may escape the flames, smoke and devastation. For homes, businesses and places of worship, save them from destruction. For those whose health is threatened by the smoke and ash, ease their suffering and protect them from permanent damage.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER: We uphold to you Lord in prayer, the forecast for fire suppression:**

Natural Resources Canada are monitoring mainly dry conditions from Manitoba through western Quebec, Labrador, and Newfoundland, although some thundershowers may affect western and northern Manitoba as the low from the southwest moves across. Generally dry conditions appear to prevail in northern Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The dry pattern in the East appear to spread across all of Quebec and the Atlantic provinces the most fire-prone area appears to be eastern Saskatchewan through western Quebec. The number of fires is well above average for this time of year, and well above the average for area burned for this time of year. There were 313 net new fire starts, with 168 of those attributed to lightning reported over the last week.

**NEW READER:** O Lord, your fingerprints are scattered across all of creation. Through each thing you have created, you show your glory. Your caring and gentle nature are on display for all to see and experience. We pray you open the heavens and bring gentle waters down from above. Lord, this very day we ask that you open the flood gates in the areas of our country that are starving for rain. We pray you bring down nourishing rains, that the land may be quenched, the forests, woods, and timberlands. We pray the communities become protected from lightning strikes and wild fires, and the rain brings forth much fruit.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER: We uphold to you Lord in prayer, the people & resources monitoring our wildfires:**

The Fire Monitoring, Mapping, and Modeling System (Fire M3) began operations in 1998 as an initiative of the Canada Centre for Remote Sensing and the Canadian Forest Service, both agencies of Natural Resources Canada. The goals of Fire M3 are to use low-resolution satellite imagery to identify and locate actively burning fires on a daily basis; to estimate daily and annual area burned; and to model fire behavior and biomass consumption from fires.

Processing of hotspot data involves combining the datasets from multiple sources, estimating fire weather conditions and fire behavior potential at hotspot locations using the Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System, and mapping burned area. In addition to images and reports for the web, data is made available to partners in fire management and industry, and it is used as input to other models such as smoke forecasting.

**NEW READER:** O Lord, until you bring about a new heavens and a new earth at the end of time, disasters will come. Give us wisdom to be ready, that we will be watchful but not fearful. We pray for the people we rely on to be responsible for monitoring our wildfires. We pray for their wisdom, knowledge and understanding of fire. We pray they provide information in a timely manner to save lives, livelihoods, livestock, and where possible, prevent the fires from spreading. Lord, we pray you make us ever mindful of ways to prepare for natural disasters; fire, floods, storms, earthquakes. We ask all this in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER: We uphold to you Lord in prayer, those protecting us from fire:**

At this time, aircraft, personnel, and equipment have been mobilized in Alberta, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories, and the Interagency Forest Fire Centre, from across Canada.

People from around the world are selflessly providing their support to our Canadian firefighters. They are leaving their homes, their families, their employment, to assist us in our wildfire battles. They are risking their lives, to save lives and livelihood of Canadians. There are American, Australian, New Zealand, South African, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chilean, and Costa Rican personnel active in Canada, with additional personnel arriving to assist. For this support, we are humbled and will be forever grateful.

**NEW READER:** O Lord, by your spirit, lift up those who have fallen, sustain those who work to rescue or rebuild, and fill us with the hope of your new creation; through Jesus Christ, our rock and redeemer.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER: We uphold to you Lord in prayer, those who have been affected by fire:**

God of wind and flame, extinguish the fires engulfing land, communities, and homes. Guard those who must flee because of the blaze, give them safety and wholeness. Bring those who have perished home to you, grant them your perpetual peace. Protect those who battle the flames, sanctify their service and send them your Spirit.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER:** O God, our refuge and strength, our help in times of trouble. Have mercy on the lands damaged by fires, where wildfire has destroyed livelihoods. Protect those who evacuate houses, and strengthen those who rebuild hope, so that entire communities may face the future without fear.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER:** Great God in heaven, you know our country is being ravaged by forest fires and that communities, property and people are at risk. We ask you would show your great power and send rain without storms, and cool weather without wind, so that these fires may cease to burn. We pray you would protect fire fighters, pilots, ground crews and support staff as they work to keep property safe from these fires. We pray most of all that lives would be spared.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER:** Almighty and eternal God, we ask your protection against these destroying fires. Fire is so very necessary for our existence, and yet, when it gets out of control, it can be more damaging than anything else. Keep our homes and buildings and woods and fields safe from this scourge. Help us always to be most careful in our use of fire. Help us especially in the winter time when the need and use fire is necessary, for then, if our homes are destroyed by fire, the suffering is even greater.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER:** O Lord, as we surround them with our prayer and strength, give grace to those who are being evacuated from their homes and businesses. Watch over them and keep them in your care. Bless those who have survived and heal their memories of trauma and devastation. May they have the courage to face the long road of rebuilding ahead.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER:** Restore our land, our homes, our faith in your goodness, and show us again how you bring life out of ash and dust. Give us the resources and strength, we ask, to rebuild and replant, and confirm in us that you are the loving Creator and Saviour.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER: In Closing, and during this time of crisis, we Pray in Hope for our World:**

Lord God, Creator of all living things, we live in hope for the actions being taken around our world to become better stewards of your earth. Continue to guide us to act responsibly, care for the earth you gave us, and make wise choices in our everyday living. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER:** O Lord, we pray that you will encourage those who are refusing to see or do anything about this catastrophe and to change their ways. Help us all to realize the life-sustaining connections between forests and our lives on earth, so that we look for ways to protect them from destructive wildfires. We give thanks for scientists and researchers who are doing their best to come up with ways to deal more effectively with climate change and wildfires. We are grateful for the diligence and often unheralded heroism of forest firefighters. And last but not least, we pray that you will give patience and resilience to families who have lost their homes, those who have lost family members, friends, their beloved companions, their cherished possessions. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

**ALL: AMEN**

**NEW READER:** Almighty God, for those affected by the wildfires, we pray;

**ALL: have mercy on them and keep them safe from harm.**

For those in the affected areas, their loved ones, neighbors, friends, pets and livestock, we pray;

**ALL: grant that they may escape the flames, smoke and devastation.**

For homes, businesses and places of worship, we pray;

**ALL: save them from destruction.**

For those whose health is threatened by the smoke and ash, we pray;

**ALL: ease their suffering and protect them from permanent damage.**

For firefighters and first responders, we pray;

**ALL: meet their needs, shield them from harm, lift their weariness, and send them relief.**

For wildlife and old growth in the path of the flames, we pray;

**ALL: grant the means of escape and prevent irreversible harm.**

For those who have already lost homes and jobs and treasured possessions, we pray;

**ALL: comfort and sustain them and restore all they've lost.**

For the displaced and the discouraged, we pray;

**ALL: lift their spirits and restore hope to them.**

For all who are stressed, anxious and fearfully following the news, we pray;

**ALL: pour out a healing and calming balm.**



And, Lord, when these fiery trials have ceased,

**ALL: renew lives, families, communities and environments in ways only you can.**

In you, O Lord, we place our trust. For you, O Lord, we wait in hope.

**ALL:**

**AMEN**

**NEW READER:** In our legs and in our feet, enable us to walk the earth with reverence and care; so that we may walk in the ways of goodness and truth, and be protected from walking away from what is true.

**ALL:**

**AMEN**

And as Jesus taught us, we pray:

**TOGETHER: Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever,**

**AMEN and AMEN**