

Alberta Wildfire Relief

May 6, 2016

Spring is a time for newness of life, but not this year in the greater Fort McMurray area where wildfires are raging, devouring everything in their path. As of the time of writing, 1,600 structures were reported to have been destroyed and a mandatory evacuation notice had been issued for the entire city, with other communities to the south and north being evacuated as the fires expand.

Fire advisories were first issued on Sunday (May 1) when an initial 500-700 hectares had burned. By Wednesday (May 4) wildfires had eaten approximately 10,000 hectares. The CBC reports, *"The wildfire is burning so intensely at its front that burning stick, vegetation and embers are belched out of it and carried by the wind, starting brand new fires. If the wind changes direction, it can be disastrous."* One wildland fire expert reported: *"...once a fire like this is up and running, the only things that are going to stop it is if the weather changes or if it runs out of fuel to burn up.... With a fire like this, it's burning so hot that air drops are like spitting on a campfire. Water and retardant might slow it down, but probably not much."* With no rain in the forecast for the foreseeable future, it is difficult to know when relief will come.

Many of the neighbourhoods within Fort McMurray have been hit hard with between 70-90% total destruction being reported in some areas. Up to 90,000 have been evacuated from Fort McMurray into areas in the south and north where it was deemed to be safer. However, strong winds and dry conditions have fueled fires and some of the areas to which residents had fled are in the path of the approaching fire and those communities have now been put on alert.

The Fellowship's Response

The Fellowship has two churches in the fire zone. NorthLife Community Church in Fort McMurray has a Sunday morning attendance of approximately 250 and runs a soup kitchen as a part of their community outreach. The church has planted a work, NorthLife Campus, about 30 minutes south of Fort McMurray in Anzac, with a morning attendance of about 20.

During the annual Fellowship Prairie Region's Regional conference (May 5-6) in Edmonton, a handful of our National Fellowship staff in attendance were able to meet and dialogue with the leadership team from Fort McMurray to see how Fellowship Baptists can help. Here is what we know:

- Initial relief work will be done through the NorthLife Fort McMurray and Anzac Campuses to provide relief to those in need.
- Once the leadership are able to assess the situation (the status of the church, needs within the church community and neighbourhood, etc.) they will put a ministry plan together.

Please be in prayer for those impacted by these deadly fires. Pray that God will provide comfort and peace. Pray for the safety of firefighters and those supporting them. Pray for our churches in the area that will be assessing the situation and preparing a ministry plan to come alongside those within the community to assist in relief efforts.

The National Fellowship has set up a fund for those wishing to assist these churches as they give a helping hand in the name of Christ to those devastated by wildfires. Donations can be made via credit card on the Fellowship's secure website: www.fellowship.ca/wildfirerelief or by mailing your donation using the form below.

Thank you for your partnership in this emergency appeal!

Yes!

I/We want to help those who have been impacted by the wildfires in Alberta and have prayerfully decided the following:



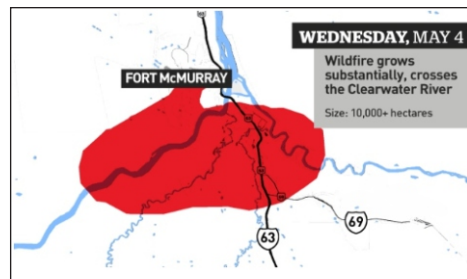
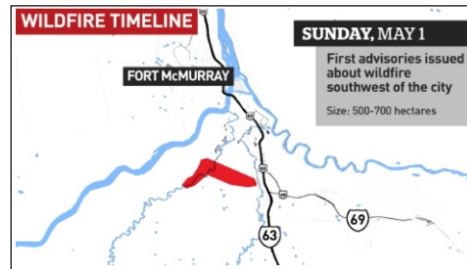
Please make cheques
payable to The Fellowship.

- ☐ Enclosed is my/our gift of \$ _____. [Acct. #5287]
☐ Please put my/our donation of \$ _____ onto a credit card:
☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard
Card number: _____
Name on card: _____
Signature: _____ Expiry date: ____ / ____

Please send receipt to:

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/Province/Code: _____
Email: _____

Please return completed form and donation to: The Fellowship P.O. Box 457 Guelph, ON N1H 6K9



(Sources: Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Press)