

‘From Ashes, He Can Bring His Glory’: Colorado Fire Spares Boulder Church

Flames fueled by fierce foothills winds failed to destroy the spirits of worshippers from Boulder Valley (Colorado) Christian Church, who gathered Sunday afternoon at neighboring Flatirons Church in nearby Lafayette, Colorado, to celebrate the preservation of their building from the Marshall Fire and pray for neighbors who lost everything, including one life.

At least 10 homes scorched to their foundations belonged to members of the Boulder Valley church, located between the cities of Boulder and Louisville and the town of Superior. Power was restored to the building Jan. 2, days after the Marshall fire forced shut-off of gas and electric power during a blast of winter snow and single-digit temperatures. But without natural gas for heating in frigid conditions following the fire, Boulder Valley Christian remained shuttered Sunday when members met for the afternoon worship service.

On Dec. 31, Lead Pastor Matt Carlson videotaped a message to update his congregation, pointing to scorched land around the church. “The fire came right up to the building, and the building is—fine. It burned through the solar field behind us, a community garden, but the building is fine,” he says.

Carlson also says offers of help are pouring in: “We are having this massive outpouring of people saying, ‘How can I help? What can I do?’”

As part of its response, Boulder Valley Christian has created an online form where people can offer to provide meals and lodging. The church also has a Crisis Response Fund, dating back to the beginning of COVID. Some of the funds received will go to individuals and families who have lost homes.

Carlson anticipates a long-term response to the crisis. "There are some immediate needs, but it's a long-term healing process—a year and more, which includes counseling and care, and financial help, and replacement of clothes and goods and all of that," he says.

Carlson offers a word of encouragement to people asking how to assist those displaced by the fire, urging his congregation to "Love your neighbors well. The people that you're connected with that you know have lost homes or are in need of help. ... be the church. Reach out to your friends that you know. Be the church. Reach out to Office of Emergency Management. Help out and serve in the community. ... The church, we will continue to have opportunities where we can serve.

"The Lord is still the Lord, and He can bring good," Carlson says. "From ashes, He can bring His glory. And I'm excited to see what He's going to do." {eoa}

Steve Rees is a former general assignment reporter who, with one other journalist, first wrote about the national men's movement Promise Keepers from his home in Colorado. Rees and Promise Keepers Founder Bill McCartney attended the Boulder Vineyard. Today Rees writes in his free time.