



St. George Coptic Orthodox Church
13905 108 Avenue, Surrey, BC, V3T 2L1
board@stgeorge.ca



Statement on the Burning of St. George's Coptic Orthodox Church, Surrey BC

July 19, 2021

Today we grieve the loss of more than a building.

On July 19, 2021 at 3:30am, flames broke out and engulfed the building of St. George's Coptic Orthodox Church.

Our church was more than a building. It brought together a diverse congregation of Coptic, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Iraqi, and Lebanese Orthodox believers. The Church was a haven where we practiced our ancient holy rites that have been preserved over centuries from our forefathers who keep the faith defying great odds. It was a place we built community, where we shared meals, where we married our youth, christened our babies and welcomed newcomers to the faith.

We do not have any insight into the cause of this incident, although we are aware an attempted arson Wednesday July 14th at 2:30am. The security footage has been released to the police and we hope that this will support their investigation into the cause of the devastation.

It is the duty of our elected officials to provide equal safety measures to protect all citizen and places of worship irrespective of their religious affiliation and cultural identity. We call on the honourable Premier John Horgan, the City of Surrey and all authorities in the Province of British Columbia to take measures to support communities of faith during this difficult time.

We are in shock and struggling to cope in the emotional wake of this incident. We are grateful to all of those who have reached out expressing their sympathies, prayers and offers of support as we determine our next steps as a community.

Quotes

"While we are in shock and devastated by this loss, we hold firm to the belief that a church is far more than a building and we will come together as a community to rebuild. We reflect on the words of the prophet Amos who prophesized the words of God saying, "In that day, I will restore David's fallen shelter— I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins and will rebuild it as it used to be." (Amos 9:11) – Fr. Bisenty Gerges, Parish Priest St. George's Coptic Church.



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For Media inquiries

For media inquiries please contact **Steven Faltas**– (604) 754-5654 or steve_faltas@yahoo.com

Donations

Those wishing to support the remediation of the grounds and rebuilding of the church can donate via email money transfer to donation@stgeorge.ca which is the Church's official channel for donations.