

May 17, 2025

STANDING WITH ST. LOUIS & KENTUCKY

a message from Week of Compassion

Late Thursday evening into early Friday (May 15-16), a powerful and fast-moving storm system swept through the Midwest and Ohio Valley, leaving devastation across several communities. In Missouri, particularly the St. Louis metro area, winds reaching up to 120 mph toppled trees, downed power lines, and damaged homes, businesses, and places of worship. In Kentucky, towns like Somerset and London experienced significant destruction due to tornadoes. Across both states, at least 21 people had died as of Saturday morning – a number expected to rise in the coming days. Dozens more were injured, and many families have been displaced.

Among those most directly affected were two Disciples congregations in St Louis:

Centennial Christian Church sustained catastrophic damage when part of its building collapsed. At the time of the storm, three members of the congregation were inside, preparing food for the church's outreach ministry – a reflection of what Centennial has always done: serving their community with love and generosity. The church had conducted a food and supply giveaway earlier that same day – one of many ways it consistently shows up for its neighbors. Tragically, one member lost their life in the building collapse, and two others were injured.

Union Avenue Christian Church also experienced major damage – including shattered stained-glass windows and a severely damaged roof. Union Avenue is a hub for vital ministries, housing Be the Neighbor and the National Benevolent Association – all of which now face possible disruption due to the storm.

These two congregations – known for their deep commitment to the community – were living their mission in the very moment the storm struck. Centennial Christian Church, in particular, has long embodied what it means to be a neighbor: preparing meals, opening doors, and creating space for connection, compassion, and care. Their faithful service in the face of danger speaks to a deep and abiding call to love boldly – even in the hardest moments.



As Rev. David Woodard, Associate Regional Minister for Greater St. Louis, shared:

"The devastation in the Kingshighway and Delmar neighborhoods made even gathering together impossible — streets blocked, buildings collapsed, and gas leaks everywhere. Our shock will give way to grief,

*and we still do not know what the future holds.
But we know who holds our future. May God's
people be united in love."*



Week of Compassion is walking alongside local leaders and the Mid-America Region, responding with immediate support and preparing for long-term recovery. Our ministry exists to ensure that when disaster strikes, the Church can show up — quickly, compassionately, and faithfully.

We know that disasters don't end when the headlines fade. Recovery takes time. Grief takes time. And our calling — as the Church — is to be present through every step of that journey.

As our General Minister and President, Rev. Terri Hord Owens, offers in her prayer:

"May your limitless love be our refuge tonight and in the coming days through every step to recover and rebuild."

This is our shared calling — to be that refuge, that presence, that love made real in moments of great need.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- **PRAY:** Lift up Centennial Christian Church and Union Avenue Christian Church, their ministries, and their neighborhoods. Pray for healing, strength, and comfort — especially for those who are grieving, for those injured, and for all who are beginning the long journey of recovery. We invite you to include Rev. Owens' prayer in your worship this Sunday as a sign of solidarity and care.
- **GIVE:** Your gifts to Week of Compassion make this response possible. Gifts can be made at our [online giving page](#), designated "US Storms & Fires." (Or mail to POBox 1986, Indianapolis IN 46206.)
- **STAY CONNECTED:** In the coming weeks and months, we will share more ways to support — including potential [volunteer opportunities](#) as recovery takes shape. If you are interested in volunteering, [please email us](#) so we can keep you informed as opportunities arise.

When one part of the Body suffers, we do not look away — we draw near. That is the witness of the Church. That is who we are as Disciples: people bound together in Christ's compassion, called to respond not only with words, but with presence, commitment, and care.

Week of Compassion is how we respond — together — with hands ready to serve, hearts ready to give, and a faith that endures long after the storm has passed.



May we continue to bear witness to that love — steadfast, present, and overflowing — as

we walk with our siblings in St. Louis and all those who suffer.

Together, we are the Church.
Together, we are the Body of Christ.
And together, we will rebuild.

all photos Centennial Christian Church; Rev. Derrick Perkins, shared via Facebook

Prayer for St. Louis area churches and the Mid-America Region

A tornado touched down in the St. Louis area this evening. We've learned of shattered windows and roof damage at Union Avenue Christian Church, and damage and injuries at Centennial Christian Church.

God of comfort and peace, our hearts cry out in grief and prayer with and for our beloved congregations, Union Avenue Christian Church and Centennial Christian Church, and the Mid-America Region. We lift up the people of St. Louis, Missouri, and all of the persons, families, and the communities ravaged by winds and tornadoes this evening. Send your comfort, O Lord, through the hands, feet, and provisions of the first responders. Send your peace, O Lord, to sustain and surround through the cloud of witnesses to your faithfulness in the midst of every storm. You promised to be "our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. "May your limitless love be our refuge tonight and in the coming days through every step to recover and rebuild. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Rev. Terri Hord Owens, General Minister and President



Download a [PDF](#) of this email, or find this and other recent [stories on our website](#).



volunteer
domestic disaster response

give
to Week of Compassion

**immigrant and
refugee response**

in case you missed it
stories & updates

MISSION : to work with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world
VISION : a world where God's people transform suffering into hope
CORE VALUES : connection - integrity - accompaniment

(317) 713-2442 info@weekofcompassion.org
www.weekofcompassion.org



Week of Compassion | PO Box 1986 | Indianapolis, IN 46206 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)