

Action Update- September 15

Expanding Compassion: Disciples Respond to Oregon Wildfires

10am EDT: Hurricane Sally has stalled just off the Mississippi-Alabama border. The storm, currently a Category 1 Hurricane, threatens to bring flooding along the gulf coast and inland across the Southeast U.S., with forecast rainfall up to 20, or even 30 inches in some locations. Week of Compassion is in touch with church leaders and partners and will provide assistance as needed following the storm.



As wildfires continue to spread across much of the west, Week of Compassion is learning more about the widespread impacts and needs. In Oregon, an historic number of fires have burned more than 1 million acres of land, and parts of the state currently have the worst air quality in the world. Hundreds of thousands of people are

under evacuation orders-- including more than 100 Disciples households.

In the midst of this ongoing emergency, churches are working to serve their neighbors. Local partnerships are critical, and existing ministries provide opportunities for response in a crisis situation. Congregations in Oregon are working with other leaders and relief organizations to identify specific needs in their area. In partnership with the Region, Week of Compassion is supporting congregations as they serve their wider communities. This response through local churches allows our impact to reach even farther, as Disciples work to meet the critical needs of their neighbors.

Medford First Christian Church has served a community meal each Thursday night for many years. They also have a food pantry and community garden. Through these ministries, the church was already connected with many of their most vulnerable neighbors. Now that their part of southern Oregon is the site of two major fires, those community connections position the congregation to have a significant impact for those in need. FCC continues to serve food once a week, now in the form of sack dinners to go. In collaboration with their community partners, FCC is also helping to distribute items collected by other Disciples churches in the region.

To the north, First Christian Church Corvallis has a long-standing ministry with unhoused members of their community, including a soup kitchen that provided daily meals prior to the pandemic. They've modified this ministry throughout the pandemic in order to stay connected with this vulnerable population. Because of their existing relationships within the area, the church was approached by a county official about serving as a temporary shelter for a small number of houseless neighbors who need respite from the poor air quality. When asked how the collaboration came about, Rev. Matt Gordon replied, "I know a guy." The congregation has now been approved as an overflow shelter to house up to 20 people for two weeks.

These are just a few of the ways in which Oregon Disciples are caring for their members and neighbors during a critical time. When congregations have a foundation of connection and relationship within the community, they find ways to expand and build upon that ministry when disasters create immediate needs.

Regional Minister Rev. Cathy Myers Wirt notes the importance of "pre-existing community" when there is an emergency. "If you already have a community, then in a crisis, you will not be alone... what I'm seeing here is all the pieces of community coming together." She says that congregations typically first check on their members, and then expand their focus to the needs of neighbors beyond the church; and then, reach even farther to connect with others in the region, working together to respond. "I'm watching them spread out their compassion," she says.

With your help, Week of Compassion continues to support these and other congregations as they respond to needs in their local communities. Through their ministries, your support not only reaches Disciples directly affected by these wildfires; it also equips these churches to expand their compassion, serving their neighbors and vulnerable families as a strong presence in a time of crisis.

Please continue to be in prayer for those who have suffered losses in these and other fires across the west, and those who remain at risk. Together, our wider Church is making a difference for those most in need from this disaster.

To support these fire relief efforts, please designate your gift as "U.S. Storms and Fires"; or, for hurricane response, designate "Hurricane/Cyclone/Typhoon."

Week of Compassion
Responses Since Sept 8



Oregon,
Fire Relief



California,
Fire Relief



Louisiana,
Hurricane Laura Relief



Florida,
COVID-19 Relief



Colorado,
COVID-19 Relief



South Carolina,
COVID-19 Relief

For an interactive map of all 2020 responses, [visit our website](#).

Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

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