

Action Update- August 25

An Update On Recent and Ongoing Disasters

Multiple wildfires continue to burn across California, including three major fires surrounding the Bay Area. The SCU Fire, affecting the East Bay Area, has burned over 360k acres and is only 15% contained. The CZU Fire, affecting South Bay and Santa Cruz areas, has burned over 78k acres and is only 17% contained. Meanwhile, the LNU Fire, in Sonoma and Napa Counties, is over 350k acres, with 27% containment. Across the three incidents, more than 1500 structures have been damaged or destroyed.

Week of Compassion is in touch with churches and partners across the state. We have learned of two Disciples churches with members who have been evacuated. With smoke blanketing the Bay Area, Disciples pastors are staying in touch with congregants and some are packed and ready to evacuate at any moment.

We also continue to monitor Hurricane Laura. After moving into the Gulf of Mexico, Tropical Storm Laura began intensifying and reached hurricane status Tuesday morning. Intensification is expected to continue, with a forecast landfall on Wednesday or Thursday as a major hurricane along the upper Texas or southwest Louisiana coast. Voluntary and mandatory evacuations are in place for several counties and parishes, while others are preparing to shelter in place. At least six Disciples congregations are within the mandatory evacuation zones, with more than dozen others in the forecast path. Disciples Crossing Camp and Retreat Center has agreed to offer shelter to evacuated Disciples, as needed.

This storm comes three years to the day after Hurricane Harvey (Aug. 25-30, 2017) devastated the same region of Southeast Texas. Week of Compassion remains in touch with church leaders and partners in the area. Please join us in prayer for those in the path of the storm, those affected by the fires, and those providing leadership and preparation during this time.

The Value Chain Continues: Even During a Pandemic

In Haiti, Week of Compassion partners Prosperity Catalyst work to empower and support women through entrepreneurship. Through business and technical training, women have opportunities to gain independence and income.

In a [previous story](#), we shared how the concept of a



Photo: Prosperity Catalyst, Haiti

'value chain' often comes into play through this type of program: an initial project opens the door to another opportunity, and those opportunities begin to benefit an entire community. For instance, what started as a candle-making endeavor in Haiti led to opportunities in beekeeping, as women learned to produce their own wax; which led to another

opportunity in sewing, as women learned to craft the protective clothing needed for beekeeping, and so on. In a successful development program, this chain of value--and a philosophy of always thinking big-picture about what can be produced locally--continues to create one opportunity after another.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to the vocational programs. The rate of COVID-19 infection in Haiti has grown rapidly since April, from very few cases to over 8,000 cases as of Aug. 24, with a significant spike in June. Given the scarcity of testing, and reports of unexplained fatalities, infection rates are likely even higher than the numbers indicate.

With support from Week of Compassion, our partners were able to quickly assemble and distribute prevention kits to the 1,000 artisans and beekeeping households involved in the program. Each kit consists of a 5-gallon hand-washing bucket with a spigot; two bars of soap; two 8oz bottles of hand sanitizer; 2 washable fabric masks; and an educational flyer to help disseminate the preventative measures. Prosperity Catalyst staff continue to stay in touch with each of these families-- as of July, none had reported a case of the virus.

When their community was impacted by COVID-19, the women of the Prosperity Catalyst program could have given up, allowing the challenges of this time to bring their industry to a halt; instead, they saw yet another opportunity. Or rather-- multiple opportunities.

The masks contained in each of the prevention kits were crafted by women from four sewing businesses who are graduates of the artisan strengthening program. This put cash in the hands of 24 women, while responding to an urgent public health need.

Meanwhile, the women involved in the beekeeping program took the lead on mixing the 2,000 bottles of hand sanitizer that went into the kits.

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on economic activity, making it difficult for the artisans and beekeepers to feed their families. The Haitian economy has also been impacted by the recession in the U.S., as many Haitian immigrants have lost their jobs and are unable to send money back home. The slowdown in remittances has hit Haitian households hard, so the next phase of the response--to distribute a one-month food ration for 1,000 partner households and deliver prevention kits to 300 residents of a group home for people living with disability -- will be greatly appreciated by vulnerable families.

We celebrate the dedication of our partners like Prosperity Catalyst, who are always seeking the opportunity within challenge; as well as the artisan community that shows such strength, creativity and resilience during even the most difficult times. With your support, we will continue to lift up these women and their communities, ensuring that the value chain opens more doors to even more growth potential.

For more about Week of Compassion's COVID-19 Response, and for resources to promote an offering in your congregation, [visit our website](#).



- Iowa, Storm Relief
- California, Fire Relief
- North Carolina, Hurricane Recovery
- Greece, COVID-19 Relief
- Tanzania, COVID-19 Relief
- Ukraine, COVID-19 Relief
- Bangladesh, COVID-19 Relief
- Haiti, COVID-19 Relief
- Cuba, COVID-19 Relief
- Dominican Republic, COVID-19 Relief
- Jordan, COVID-19 Relief
- Palestine, COVID-19 Relief
- Somalia, COVID-19 Relief
- South Sudan, 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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