



MISSION MOMENT: SUNNY DAY CAMP

On a dark night in early December 2021, entirely out of season, tornadoes tore across eight states, killing more than 80 people and devastating many communities. Just eight months later, on a warm Saturday in July, two Disciples churches and several community organizations made sure that dozens of children impacted by those winter storms in western Kentucky spent time outside with friends and caregivers, reveling in a bright and sunny day.

As their churches were recovering from the storms, caring for their members and communities, and even hosting long-term recovery volunteers, pastors at First Christian Church of Madisonville and First Christian Church of Princeton dreamed of a way to connect with the region’s youngest survivors—children from kindergarten to fifth grade who were affected by the tornadoes.

How could they care for children who had been through so much, so little of it they could understand? In the season after such fear, how could these children feel loved and have access to the care they needed? How could the church help them blossom and flourish—how could they, in the words of Lamentations, rise up anew?

With the support of Week of Compassion; gifts and volunteers from both congregations; and the expertise of Children’s Disaster Services (a Week of Compassion partner), a medical team at Baptist Health Deaconess Madisonville, and Child Life Disaster Services (a local network of specialists with expertise in trauma, positive coping, and resilience), the Sunny Day Camp was born.

Children spent an entire day, at no cost to their families, going about perfectly typical day camp fare at the Western Kentucky 4-H Camp: canoeing, crafts, swimming, meals and snacks. And alongside these gifts of normalcy, trained professionals provided age-appropriate opportunities for processing grief and trauma. Children connected with therapy animals, worked with disaster relief counselors, and had a local physician available for care onsite.

A living witness to God’s constant mercies, and committed to healing and wholeness especially among the youngest and most vulnerable, these churches and their local partners put your Week of Compassion gifts to work, transforming suffering into hope, so that churches, communities, and children can rise up anew, together.

Our hope is rooted and nourished by God’s steadfast, abundant, enduring, ever-in-supply and in season compassion.

Remembering the compassion of God can ease the pain of what seems like a never-ending news cycle of devastation.

*Yet it is because I remember all this that I have hope.
YHWH’s favor is not exhausted,
nor has God’s compassion failed.
They rise up anew each morning,
so great is God’s faithfulness.
(Lamentations 3:21-23, The Inclusive Bible)*

Singing this promise can give us the strength of heart to **RISE UP ANEW** when our hearts are weary from the work of caring about and for all those in need in this beautiful and broken world.

When rains come and waters rise, generosity follows close behind.

When fires rage and destruction looms, support and help are stirred up too.

When war and disease and drought are too close for too long, compassion comes closer, and God’s mercies are made known through the gifts of God’s people.

Through domestic disaster response in familiar communities; preparedness training for congregations and individuals; refugee response in the aftermath of national conflicts; and ecumenical partnerships that engage international disaster response and support basic human needs for shelter, food, education, and livelihoods Week of Compassion proclaims this truth: God’s mercies **RISE UP ANEW** each day.

Because of your generosity, Week of Compassion meets people and communities in the midst of grief and lament, in the deepest moments of ‘How could this happen?’, as the very real presence of God’s unfailing compassion.

