



photos: 1 Judi Frost; 2,3 CDS

# MISSION MOMENT: **GIFTS TO LIVE ON** Caring for Children after Maui Fires

When gale-force winds rushed along the mountains of Maui, they brought down power lines, ignited grasslands, and contributed to what has become “America’s deadliest wildfire in more than a century.” An extremely dry summer, strain on the island’s water resources, and winds as a result of the simultaneous Hurricane Dora, exacerbated the flames, and the toll on land and people continued to mount.

More than 100 lives were lost, and 1500 evacuated to shelters as at least 2200 structures were destroyed (85% of them residential). Hundreds of families were placed in emergency temporary housing, including several thousand hotel and vacation rentals secured to house those displaced, but months later, many such agreements are expiring. With housing already at a premium on the island prior to the fire, finding ‘temporary’ housing solutions is a significant challenge, especially as rebuilding will be a years-long process.

As neighbors across the mainland followed the news, anxious for word from friends and family, and eager to help in any way possible, Week of Compassion was in contact with Disciples colleagues, ecumenical partners, and local response leaders assessing the situation for immediate response and long-term recovery plans.

Week of Compassion partner [Children’s Disaster Services](#) rapidly deployed a team of volunteers, offering a compassionate response and care focused on children, as parents navigated the first days of reaction and recovery. Judi Frost is a member of the Week of Compassion Board of Stewards and a trained and experienced CDS volunteer. She deployed with an early CDS team to set up a center for children to be cared for while parents who have finally found some temporary shelter begin to ponder what’s next.

“Then they are able to start exploring resources,” Judi says. “Sometimes the parents check the kids in with us so they can have an opportunity to talk with each other in private about their concerns. ... One father who couldn’t bear the thought of being separated from his children while he was just around the corner in the resource center saw Luca [a white macaw, injured and rescued from the fires], asked what was happening with him, then went over and stood silently by Luca’s cage for 15 minutes. He found a shady spot and stayed to watch his children play with us for a while. It’s hard to imagine the depth of this tragic reality. And we get to witness the commitment and compassion of the hundreds of people who are here to offer ... something.”

Local government estimates for long-term recovery are close to \$6 billion dollars, with a years-long timeline taking shape. The emotional and spiritual impacts on communities devastated by loss of life, loss of cultural and historical items, and the trauma of first-responder teams will be significant and ongoing. As the recovery continues to evolve, Disciples remain ready to respond through Week of Compassion, engaging a network of ecumenical partners and local organizations to make the greatest impact with human and financial resources, in ways that best serve the needs of the affected community.

One of Week of Compassion's partners, Hawai'i VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), is very clear that local organizations are taking the lead, and Week of Compassion is grateful to partner with them. Those who know communities best are also best equipped to craft and implement an effective response. Local partners take stock of everything from neighborhood characteristics and familial languages, to cultural nuances, building materials, and land considerations that allow for rebuilding in ways that are just and equitable, preserving community and culture.

Such community-led recovery focuses first on the gifts brought from within, enhanced by the support of others in mutual generosity. In the story of the generous widow (Luke 21:1-4), Jesus sees the widow and her gift and rejoices in her giving. Week of

Compassion follows her lead, when as Disciples we bring an all-that-we-are offering, receive unexpected gifts from unlikely places, and take seriously the gathering and sharing of resources for the sake of those in need. In the gifts we bring, others find what they need. In the act of giving, the impact carries beyond the giver. Blessed by God's mercy and multiplied by God's grace, these are truly **GIFTS TO LIVE ON.**

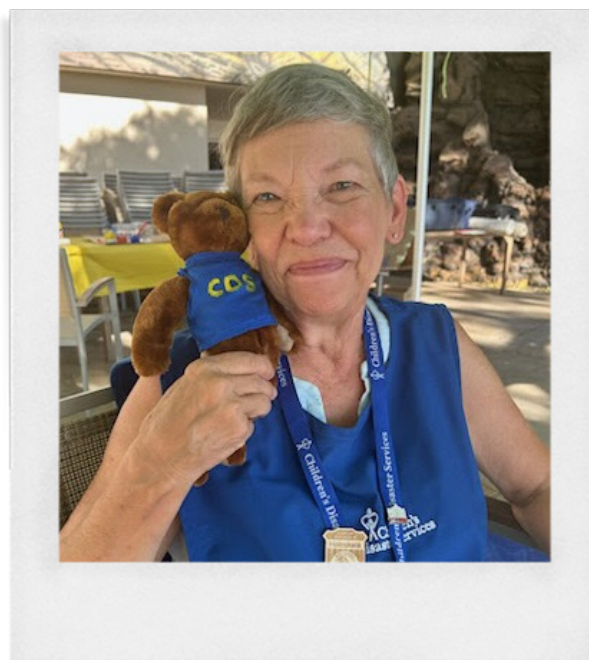


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