

BDM and Pacific Southwest District respond to California's Camp Fire

California's Camp Fire, so named because it started along Camp Creek Road, is the deadliest wildfire in California's recorded history. It began on the morning of November 8, 2018 and quickly engulfed the town of Paradise, destroying all but a very few buildings. Residents had to flee for their lives. A total of 52,000 have been evacuated from the fire area. One week later, the fire was only 45 percent contained but had already covered 142,000 acres and destroyed nearly 12,000 structures, most of which were single-family homes. The death toll as of November 15 was 63, however the list of missing people was rising quickly, reaching over 630 at that point.

One of the structures destroyed in the fire was the Paradise Church of the Brethren, also known as the Paradise Community Church, along with its other buildings, including the parsonage. The pastor was able to evacuate but their home and belongings were destroyed.

Brethren Disaster Ministries and the Pacific Southwest (PSW) district of the Church of the Brethren are working closely together to respond to this disaster. Children's Disaster Services was requested by the State of California Emergency Services to serve the Camp Fire survivors in a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) in Chico, Calif. Eight volunteers were deployed on November 16 to provide childcare for families who visit the DRC in search of assistance to begin their process of recovery. The American Red Cross is providing some support to CDS on this deployment. Brethren Disaster Ministries is communicating with PSW district Executive Russ Matteson and with partner agencies on the ground to determine how it might respond in other ways. A long-term response, including rebuilding, will be needed.

The Pacific Southwest District is collecting funds to provide direct support to the pastor and other members of the Paradise Church of the Brethren as they recover from the Camp Fire. Contributions can be sent to:

Pacific SW District Church of the Brethren (PSWD COB)
PO Box 219
La Verne, CA 91750
Please note "Paradise Fire".

Donations to support the Children's Disaster Services response and Brethren Disaster Ministries' long-term recovery response in Paradise, Calif., and other areas in northern California impacted by the Camp Fire, can be sent to:

Emergency Disaster Fund
Church of the Brethren
1451 Dundee Ave.
Elgin, IL 60120
Please note "Camp Fire Response"

As the fire rages on, and in the months of recovery following, please continue to lift up in prayer the survivors of this devastating event as well as the first responders, including CDS volunteers.