

Ministry Development: Emmanuel, Maui Learning How to Share God's Compassionate Care Being God's People After Lahaina

This is your DDRC, Rev (em) Phil Zabell.



Courtesy of 1st VP the Rev Dr Mitch Gowen, OSLC, Aiea, an image taken the night of 8/8/23. Lahaina is in the middle left portion of the photo.

Two weeks ago today the lives of the people of Lahaina and beyond took a turn which will impact the lives of all of us far into the future. Slowly, day by day, often imperceptibly, hope and healing are returning.

As instruments of that hope and healing, a team of six has been on island assisting the people of Emmanuel, Maui, in the mission of bringing God's mercy to the survivors of the wildfire which consumed about 80% of Lahaina. As of this writing with around 80% of the destroyed properties surveyed, 114 have been determined to have lost their lives. By 8/19/23 1,269 people had moved from the emergency shelters into 6 hotels after

14,000 tourists vacated the island in order for local authorities to be able to focus their attention on the surviving families.

The first thing important to note is that this team did not self-deploy. Prior to travelling to Maui, arrangements were made for their food and lodging in consultation with Emmanuel, Maui, congregation president Leif Sjostrand and head elder Russell Wilson. Other agencies were not so considerate with some now having had to return to their home bases without having done anything of value on the ground in Maui.



Pictured from L to R: Russell Wilson, Head Elder, Congregation Secretary Diane Wilson, LCC Deaconess Kathy O'Day, Emmanuel School Principal Josh Rempfer, & LCC President the Rev Chris Singer. Emmanuel is currently in the process of calling a pastor.

At the invitation of DP the Rev Michael Lange and DDRC the Rev (em) Phil Zabell, the team, consisting of Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) Pres/CEO Chris Singer and wife Jeanette, Deaconess Kathy O'Day, Rev Ralph Schmidt of Orphan Grain Train (OGT), Rev Rod Hall, and Rev Mark

Hannemann of Good Friend Ministries (GFM), arrived on island on or about 8/16. Shortly after arrival the team made connection with the congregation leadership and community resources to begin to assess from a local perspective what was needed and what capacity the congregation and partners might have in meeting those needs.



Already accomplished, and ongoing, is the distribution of gift cards. [As described in a previous article in any disaster scenario the best way to be of distance help is via cash not goods.] CNH Disaster Funds, LCMS Disaster Response, the



Lutheran Mission Council of Hawaii (LMCH= Circuit 10), LCEF, LCC, OGT, and your cash donations to one of these or to Emmanuel, Maui, have made it possible to distribute cards as early as 8/10/23. This hui (Hawaiian for an association of entities working together) is a living example of the Hawaiian concept of ohana (the word for family). Our ohana stretches far and wide from those who are our boots on the ground to any who have concern and compassion for those affected by this disaster. As survivors receive these cards it is often accompanied by tears of gratitude as they become aware they are not in this alone. This also sometimes provides an opportunity to pray for the recipient and share the hope we have as a result of the Good News about Jesus, the Christ.

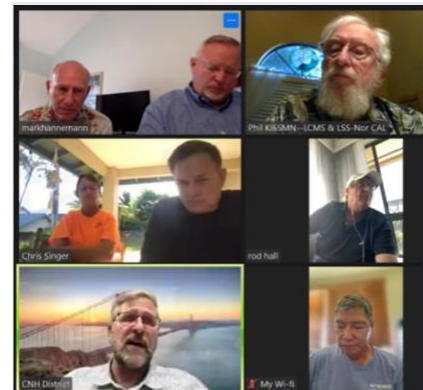
Orphan Grain Train ✝ In addition, OGT is air shipping 12 pallets containing food, hygiene products, toiletries, and pre-sorted/packaged clothes on a flight expected to arrive 8/22/23. At a date future a freighter will bring additional supplies. In order to warehouse these goods until distribution by the Emmanuel team, OGT pre-arranged a location at which to store them. This avoided two problems, one the need for personnel to do the sorting/categorizing, and also where to put the goods until contact could be made with the survivors needing them. Plans are already in place to get these items to the survivors using trucks and people who are standing by awaiting their arrival.



Ministry has also been taking place with the children and families of the school. Guided by the principal, Josh Rempfer, team members met with the children in the classrooms of a number of grades. The children expressed concerns using words like “horrified, anxious, worried, stress.”

This included many things they had heard from parents. They were reassured to “Have faith in God.” Team members also met with and led devotions for the Emmanuel LC School staff.

On the evening of 8/19, President Lange convened a Zoom meeting for the purposes of dialoging about what had taken place so far and what might be possible for the future. A plan is under development to provide ongoing support for the congregation in their ongoing ministry among the disaster survivors. In addition to the BASIC LERT training which took place the afternoon of 8/20 it is hoped that grants will be identified which would make it possible to further train & equip the congregation membership with caring/listening skills and a transition plan for the time when the deployed support team must return to their home locations.



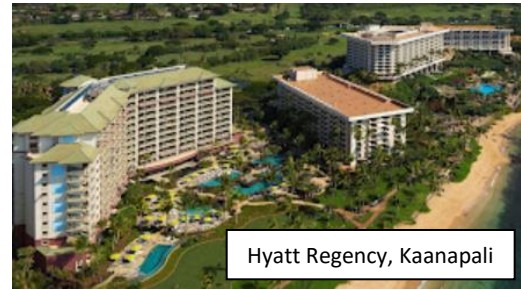
8/19 Zoom participants from top L to R: Ralph Schmidt, Mark Hannemann, Phil Zabell, Kathy O’Day, Chris Singer (not pictured: Leif Sjostrand), Rod Hall, DP Lange, and Russell Wilson.



Pictured to the left are those who participated in the BASIC LERT training led by Kathy O’Day (DDRC for the Northern Illinois District) who is in the extreme left of the photo.

In the meantime, the ministry continues with a focus at the Hyatt Regency, Kaanapali, where 571 survivors are temporarily housed.

Team members are deploying there to provide spiritual/emotional care. They will also have a supply of gift cards with them. The hotel is providing a room where survivors can meet with the team members while preserving their dignity and privacy.



Hyatt Regency, Kaanapali



Back Row (L to R): Pastor Mark Hanneman, Pastor Chris Singer, Pastor Ralph Schmidt, Pastor Rodney Hall.
Front Row (L to R): Leif Sjostrand (Congregation President), Maile Sjostrand (1st Grade Teacher), Desi Omura (Preschool Teacher), Jeanette Singer, Victoria Hall, Deaconess Kathy O'Day, Russell Wilson (Head Elder)

At worship on Sunday Pastors Rod Hall and Chris Singer were invited to join Emmanuel's worship team on keys and drums. Singer also delivered a message of hope to those assembled. During the message there was dialogue with those in attendance about what they were experiencing. When asked to consider what Jesus might be asking them, the congregation shared, "Do you trust Me?" "Do you believe in Me?" "Do you love Me?" Singer then led from those questions into Matt. 15:21-28 and Jesus' recognition of a faith that is trusting even when the WHY is not answered and God appears silent. During Bible Study Pastor Mark Hannemann leaned into this as he provided instruction on Christian Care and the fact that the "WHY" question should be replaced with "WHAT" does Jesus want for us

through this. This was all solidified in the sharing of the body and blood of our Lord. The Sacrament came as a reminder of just how intimately our God is with us (Emmanuel).

If you would like to know more or to schedule a Lutheran Early Response Team training event for the congregations in your area, please contact CNH District Disaster Response Coordinator, KIGSMN [Rev (em) Phil Zabell], pzcard@yahoo.com.

