



In response to the wildfire devastation in Southern California, you can

- 1. Make a donation to Covenant Presbyterian Church**, indicating that it is for 'Wildfire Relief' and then Covenant will make a church donation in support of Presbyterian efforts providing assistance through *Presbyterian Disaster Relief*.

Presbyterian Disaster Relief (PDR):

God's people are called on to stand in the "GAP"

Give. Act. Pray.

when devastation hits a community.

Please note:

DR000165 US Wildfires is the designated account supplementing the *One Great Hour of Sharing* offering to enable a significant response for U.S. wildfires.

2. Give directly to the PDR

- using this link — <https://pcusa.org/donate/dr000165-us-wildfires> .
- calling 800-872-3283.
- sending a check, designating where you want your gift to go on the memo line and mail to:
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) P. O. Box 643700 Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700.

Presbyterian News Service posted this article:

For a while on Tuesday, Jan. 7, it was just an ordinary day for the Rev. Matt Hardin, pastor of Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church. That changed the moment he learned that the Southern California campus was in danger of being overtaken by wildfire.

"I was in a meeting that morning (around 11:15 a.m.) when the preschool director came and interrupted me and told me what was happening, and I stepped outside into the church parking lot," Hardin said. "You could see the flames just across the way, coming our direction, and the wind was blowing in our direction."

After the campus was swiftly and safely evacuated, "I ran on foot down to the local elementary school because traffic was all backed up, to get my two kids," Hardin said. "My wife met me from her work at the church parking lot, and we all got in her car and got out of there, so I didn't have a chance to go home to get anything."

Likewise, "I didn't have a chance to get anything out of the church — out of my office," he said. Now Hardin wonders "If I just took another minute, what would I have done differently?"

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has provided grants and other support to three presbyteries in the affected region and has been meeting regularly with local executives who are assessing needs and compiling resources to help those affected. Earlier this week, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) issued a formal appeal, encouraging members and friends to support PDA's response by giving to the ministry's wildfire fund.

On the local level and even abroad, Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church, and individuals associated with it, have been receiving an outpouring of support that has taken various forms, from prayers to the use of a fellowship hall at a sister church to hold gatherings.

"The prayers we're getting right now and the support and encouragement are making a very hard situation a little bit easier," Hardin said. "It really, really helps."

And church members are thankful for their lives and each other. "We've been through this terrible tragedy together, but we're here to support each other," he said. "You just have a whole new appreciation and love for them."

Since the disaster, members have started gathering about eight miles away at Westwood Presbyterian Church, where Hardin previously served as associate pastor. Last Sunday, Westwood made essential goods — from toiletries and diapers to children's books and stuffed animals — available to people attending the Pacific Palisades church. It's also partnering with the First Presbyterian Church of Santa Monica to collaborate on similar efforts to help Pacific Palisades members and others affected by the wildfires.

"Lots of people are rolling up their sleeves and it's just beautiful to see," said the Rev. Dr. Christine Chakoian, pastor of Westwood Presbyterian Church. Their handiwork serves as "a sign of the everlasting arms."

Hardin is grateful for the small acts of kindness being offered by people, from churches to the broader community.

"It's been amazing the number of angels that we've each had put in our life by God through this," he said. "Total strangers. People on the street giving us things as we're waiting in line" and even a pharmacist going the extra mile to provide medication. These are "just dear people."

Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church burned down despite the efforts of firefighters and neighbors who tried to save the property. Though a manse next door that was not being used by Hardin remains, almost everything else was destroyed.

"We had a metal Celtic cross in our Communion table," Hardin said. It appears "that's the only thing that remains — the cross."

In addition to losing the church, several people have lost their residences. "We're into the dozens right now of members and friends who've lost homes," Hardin said. "It's a very long list." ... Meanwhile, church members will be continuing to meet at Westwood and take solace in one another. "It's worship, but it's also a chance for us to see each other, comfort each other and also get out important information and resources and materials that people need right now," Hardin said.