



Leoni Meadows Starts to Recover After the Caldor Fire





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Recently, Craig Heinrich, executive director of Leoni Meadows Christian Camp and Retreat Center, shared his thoughts in the aftermath of the Caldor Fire, which burned much of the camp's acreage and some buildings.

"As part of my survey after the fire roared through Leoni, I made my way to the Wilderness Camp overnighiter spot on Dogtown Creek," he said. "It was one of the most beautiful, pastoral places in the whole 1,000 acres—huge old-growth Douglas fir trees, six and eight feet in diameter, plus a wonderful creek with neat plants that grew leaves big enough to wear as hats.

"As I drove down the steep grade, tears filled my eyes. Everywhere I looked there was nothing but smoking roots and burning trees. I didn't see a single living plant throughout the whole trip. Everything was burnt beyond recognition. At one point I accidentally scared a red-tailed fox. I hardly recognized him. His fur was singed, and his feet were blistered as he limped away, looking for a place to rest. The knot in my throat wouldn't go away as my eyes watered—and not just because of the smoke. I was mourning the loss of one of God's incredible gifts to Leoni.

"A couple months later, my wife was finally ready to see Dogtown, the area I had only described in words. As we drove, I noticed the little spring that crossed the road had grass growing beside it. The oak trees that I had assumed were dead were poking up little green shoots. Once at Dogtown, I noticed those funny hat plants had already regrown their leaves. Everywhere I looked there were signs that God had not forsaken us—signs that Leoni will come back and continue to be a place of ministry!"

Heinrich and his staff are working tirelessly, in collaboration with insurance adjusters, to get the camp operational



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by summer 2022. One of the first steps in the process was to reconnect into the electrical grid—a necessary but costly undertaking since all the poles, wires, and transformers were completely burned. Plans are being made to rebuild and improve the nature center, craft building, and pool facility.

The Northern California Conference is committed to seeing its camp up and running. “Leoni Meadows is our much-loved camp, and it is wonderful to see progress being made,” said NCC President Marc Woodson. “We miss its ministry, but God is transforming this tragedy into joy.”

Heinrich wants people to hold onto hope. “During this season, let’s recount our blessings,” he said. “I pray that through all the craziness this world has thrown our way, that you too can see the ever-present leading hand of Jesus Christ. Thank you to all those who have supported Leoni during her time of need.”

If you wish to contribute to the Leoni Meadows Recovery Fund, please visit leonimeadows.org.

By Laurie Trujillo