

Churches, Faith Groups Continue Spirit-Birthing Ministry as Surfside Condo Rescue Turns to Recovery

Throughout the rescue efforts of the horrific Surfside Champlain Towers South building collapse on June 24, churches and other faith groups have gone forth, ministering in the name of Christ to those most in need. Charisma News has previously reported on this effort, but with the news of the official switch of the rescue operation to recovery mission at midnight Wednesday, faith-based efforts continue—and God continues to show Himself strong.

Hours before the formal transition to recovery mission, emergency workers joined local officials, chaplains and rabbis in a moment of silence. And after the announcement, an impromptu vigil of remembrance began among family members, faith leaders and first responders, per *The Palm Beach Post*. Hundreds gathered along the sidewalk on Harding Avenue at the “wall” of remembrance dedicated to those who died in the collapse.

“We have all asked God for a miracle, so the decision to transition from rescue to recovery is an extremely difficult one,” Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said at a news conference, per The Associated Press. The death toll late Wednesday stood at 54, with 86 people remaining unaccounted for. Detectives continue their work to verify that those listed as missing were in the building at the time of collapse. Levine Cava noted that rescuers had used “every possible strategy, and every possible technology available to them” to aid in locating people.

And first responders from other parts of the country remain on the scene as well. Frank Salomon, deputy fire chief from Phoenix who serves with a FEMA search and rescue team, told about the impromptu vigil. "They prayed on the debris pile," he said. "That was for the survivors, the families, to give them the start to healing, the start of closure."

Salomon, who serves on one of the FEMA search and rescue teams aiding in the effort, had more to say about the devastation found in Surfside., "The images that you see never go away. I have seen other collapses. Of course, it is not the World Trade Center, but I tell you what, it is the same devastating effect."

Crisis-trained chaplains from the Billy Graham Rapid Response team remain on the scene to offer emotional and spiritual care to grieving residents in the Surfside community, reports the Billy Graham Evangelism Association. "I've been to a lot of deployments ... hurricanes, fires, [etc.], but this is different," said Josh Holland, BG-RRT's assistant director. "It's a very tragic one in a way I haven't seen before."

Casa Church, a Hispanic congregation directly across the street from the collapsed condominium building, continues its ministry to the grieving and to first responders: