

What did you do this summer?

On January 12, 2010 Haiti was devastated by a massive 7.0 earthquake. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed and even more were injured and left homeless.

On June 26, 2010, Rich and Ellie Feilmeier, of Faith Lutheran in Early, Iowa returned to Haiti for their second trip. They worked with the Children of Israel Orphanage (CIO) both summers. For two weeks after the earthquake the children of the orphanage were living in tents in a refugee camp nearby. During the earthquake the original orphanage in Les Cayes received some damage, but the extent was unclear. So to prevent any further tragedy they moved locations to their new but undeveloped property in the city of Torbek. They then began building in Torbek. They built Lionni Isidor's house (named after the wife of the late Pastor Israel Isidor and founder of the orphanage). Lionni's home is currently housing both her and the 15 girls of CIO. The boys from CIO are staying in a relative's house adjacent to the property until permanent housing is built for them.



“During our travels from Port au Prince to Les Cayes we were able to witness firsthand the devastation that was caused by the earthquake. The tent cities that sprung up rapidly after the earthquake to house those who were left homeless were intended to be temporary housing but unfortunately have turned into permanent housing for many Haitians,” says Rich Feilmeier.

Rich and Ellie helped build the road into CIO and dig trenches to begin the construction of the security wall around the property. Their group also organized and conducted a vacation Bible school at the church. The attendance grew from around 100 children the first day and up to 500 children on the third and final day.

Ellie says, “one of my highlights was getting reacquainted with all the kids and seeing that they were okay. Four children from the orphanage had been adopted since the earthquake and there was a new face in the boys' group; three-year-old Cardonal from Port au Prince who was orphaned since the earthquake.”

Rich and Ellie hope to continue their travels to Haiti to serve God and the people of Haiti.



“We went to Alaska this summer!”

Ten members of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Guthrie Center, returned on July 19 from a mission trip to Alaska. Pastor Steve and Cheryl Wichtendahl, Roger and Payden Willms, Tyler Rutherford, Lyle Short, Chuck and Ethan Tromp, Dalton Grove, and Janelle Godwin flew to Alaska on July 9 to spend a week in Ninilchik teaching Vacation Bible School. This was in coordination with Alaska Mission for Christ. This organization sends teams from Lutheran churches to different parts of Alaska to teach Vacation Bible School or to do a “hammer and nails” project.

The theme of their Vacation Bible School program was “Planet Zoom.” This program illustrated that just as the beehive is a busy

place, so the church is a busy place too. Believers in our Savior, Jesus, come together to hear God’s Word and grow in faith. At church, we receive forgiveness, rest, motivation, and energy to go back into the world to do the work God gave us to do—believe in Jesus, live as His people, and tell other people about Him. This was developed and reinforced through the teaching of God’s Word, music, skits and other activities.

Each day over 60 children from the surrounding area of Ninilchik, with over 100 children in total, attended the Vacation Bible School program during the week at the ranch of John and Deloris Lindeman. The Lindemans have offered the use of their ranch for the teaching of Vacation Bible School for the past nineteen years, and it has grown every year. They also provided accommodations for the team to stay with them during the week.

Teaching VBS requires a lot of improvisation and it was no different at the ranch as the team encountered a few obstacles that normally aren't found in a church setting. Usually, there are tables and chairs to be used. Since the children were taught their lessons in a pole barn, a horse barn and a garage, bales of hay were used to sit on and boards were placed over other bales to be used as tables. “Ye olde outhouse” was used instead of a flush toilet. Learning on the ranch gave the children an extra special treat; they were able to go on horseback rides! It was unusual for Iowans to have daylight for almost 24 hours. 11 P.M. seemed like 8 P.M. and it was difficult to go to bed sometimes. The darkest it got was about 2 A.M. and that was more like dusk at that time. In addition to the garage being used for crafts, the team prepared and ate their meals there, and the men slept in the loft above the garage. The women had a separate cabin at the back of the ranch and they prayed that the bears and moose would not come around during the night

While in Alaska, the team also got to see the wonders of God’s creation. They spent some time exploring Matanuska Glacier; visiting the coastal towns of Homer and Seward, taking a 5 mile hike to the Russian River Falls to watch the salmon start to run; and taking a bus tour through Denali Park. They concluded their stay with a fresh halibut and salmon supper hosted by Mike Short, nephew of Lyle Short.



If interested in either an Alaska or Haiti mission trip for next summer, please contact ellie.menz@idwlcms.org.