

Pastor serves with Maui County Fire Department

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MOLOKAI, Hawaii (BP)—One Southern Baptist has seen the tragedy of last month's devastating wildfires in Maui from several angles. Henry "Hanale" Lindo, serves as both pastor of Kaunakakai Baptist Church and assistant chief of operations for the Maui County Fire Department.

Lindo, who has served with the Maui County Fire Department for 28 years, said he and the department never had experienced anything like the recent wildfires on the island.

"As firefighters, and in my whole entire career, we're so used to winning the fight," Lindo said.

"I've been to numerous fires and emergencies, and we always come out on top. We may have major fires where we might lose a couple of structures here and there ... but the fires on Maui stretched us super thin as a department force. Every single resource we had on the island was at one of the three fires.

"After it was said and done, when you look at the devastation and the chaos and all that happened ... as firefighters it's hard to believe what happened. For a firefighter, it's absolutely heart-wrenching and gut-wrenching, because we did everything we possibly could, and the end result is what we see. We were unable to do what we're so used to doing ... to stop the fire from causing the greatest amount of devastation. My heart hurts for our members."

Lindo, who became assistant chief of operations in December 2021, said 15 firefighters and four ocean safety officers with the department were among

the thousands who lost their homes in the fires.

Relying upon God

Despite this, Lindo said many lives miraculously were saved through the heroic efforts of the force.

And through it all, Lindo has done what he always has—relied on God to help him lead the force.

“Emotionally and mentally, it was just draining for me in the days after the fire,” Lindo said. “It’s easy to get depressed and get caught up in the emotions, but I look back at my walk with God, and that’s where the hope comes from.

“The hope lies in resting in what God has done for mankind in securing a future and a hope for us. Many Christians out there usually go to God when everything is bad, but I spent a lot of years when everything was good. Those are the times I pressed in even more—understanding his word, understanding his promises. That’s where I set my anchor.

“Our department members and our church members, they’re watching my walk. The model that I’ve got to model is Jesus and what he has shown.”

In addition to his role with the fire department, Lindo has been pastor of Kaunakakai Baptist for three years. But in this difficult season, he said it has been his congregation that has been ministering to him.

“It’s absolutely been great. My people love and care for me,” Lindo said.

“Our people in the church were able to step up and cover for me the first week when I wasn’t able to return home. But as soon as I had an opportunity, I told my chief I need to step away from work and get back home to recharge and rejuvenate. As much as I wanted to stay away from

people, I knew that's not what was needed for myself and for our church. I believe in the strength of unity and the unity of faith."

Kaunakakai Baptist's building was spared from the fires, as it is located on Molokai, one of the islands making up Maui County which were not affected by the tragedy (the four islands constituting Maui or Maui County are Lanai, Maui, Molokai and the uninhabited Kaho'olawe).

Lindo said the church stands ready to help with the rebuild efforts, and he credited the work of other churches and state convention workers helping meet immediate needs.

As the long recovery continues, Lindo believes ministering amid the tragedy is exactly where God wants him.

"I don't believe in coincidences," Lindo said. "I don't know why I ended up in the position that I'm in. I look at God's hand and I think, 'Why am I in this position?'"

"I believe in some way, shape or form, it's to bring hope and to help in the rebuild. God is the God of restoration and reconciliation, and that's who I trust in, and that's what our people in our department need right now moving forward."