

## Pastoral Letter

*to be read in the churches of the Diocese January 3 2020*



Dear friends in Christ,

*“To you, O LORD, I cry. For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flames have burned all the trees of the field. Even the wild animals cry to you because the watercourses are dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.”*  
*Joel 1:19-20*

The words of God’s prophet express the cries of our hearts. We grieve with and for those who have lost property and loved ones. We groan with and for creation as it waits for rescue. We long for quenching rain and relief.

Over the past week members of Parishes across our Diocese have worked selflessly to care for their neighbours. Our Anglicare disaster response teams have staffed evacuation centres alongside other volunteers. Church buildings have been opened to provide a space for reflection and a place of refuge. Please join with me in thanking God for every act of courage and kindness.

After the time of crisis has passed I will be communicating how we will work together as we move into recovery. In the meantime can I encourage you to respond with prayer and generosity. In Appendix A I have included some prayer resources for you to use in your Sunday services and other gatherings. Appendix B gives details of how you can make donations to Anglicare’s disaster response and relief efforts. Please distribute this information widely.

The photo included with this letter shows what is left of St Saviour’s Church Quaama in the Parish of Cobargo. You will notice the bell is still standing. I look forward to the time when it once again summons a community to grieve and to find comfort and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Risen Jesus be our comfort and hope now and always.

Your brother and Bishop,

**+ *Mark Short***

Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn  
3 January 2020

## Appendix A: Prayer Resources

*A prayer written by the Dean of St Andrew's Cathedral. The Very Reverend Kanishka Raffel:*

Lord of all days and years, and time and eternity, You made this land and have blessed us with its riches and beauty.

You are a refuge to all who seek your shelter, our strong defence in trial and tribulation.

Send rain we pray to extinguish flames and heal our land.

Mercifully protect life and property.

Give help and hope to our neighbours assailed by fire.

Comfort and provide for those who grieve.

Uphold those who suffer loss,

Give peace and hope to those bewildered and broken-hearted.

We thank you for men and women of courage and selflessness.

We thank you for brave communities of care and support, We thank you for those who share your comfort and hope, We thank you for those at a distance giving and praying.

Lord, you sent your Son so that we would know your power to save, your presence with your people in this world of turmoil, and your promise to renew the whole creation. Turn our hearts to you, that we may have faith for this day and hope for eternity.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Intercessions prepared by the Dean of St Saviour's Cathedral, The Very Reverend Phillip Saunders*

At this time of bushfire emergency in Australia we cry out to God calling on his mercy, saying, Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those whose homes and livelihoods have been destroyed in the bushfires. When they are weighed down by grief and loss, uphold them in your love.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those have lost loved ones in the fires and the families of fire fighters who have given their lives for others. Surround them with supportive family and communities to comfort them. Give them the assurance of your constant care.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for emergency workers, volunteers, and chaplains who are giving their time and resources so freely, and who often feel overwhelmed and depleted of energy by the demands of these extreme circumstances. Grant them renewed strength and hope.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the work of Anglicare and other caring agencies as they strive to meet the immediate needs of those affected by the fires. For our church, that we may respond effectively to the crisis giving generously and compassionately.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our bishop Mark, Archdeacon Carol and church leaders in fire ravaged areas. Give them wisdom and energy they need to respond with the love of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the leaders of our nation. Give them a desire to lead us in this time of crisis with integrity and compassion and to make available the resources necessary to respond effectively. Give them the desire to work to restore balance in our environment.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, the magnitude of this emergency overwhelms us. Remind us of the One we follow, who suffered and died for us and rose to bring us new life. Bring new life and hope in this dire situation. Bring rain, restore your creation and heal our land. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

*A prayer request from The Reverend Doug Newman, Rector of Bateman's Bay Parish*

Pray that as a faith community we can exhibit the peace of Christ in these very challenging and anxiety causing times. That we can care for those who God gives us the opportunity to serve with love, grace and patience. Give thanks for the love of God that we have experienced, continue to experience and have seen as we walk among the community in these days of challenge.

## Appendix B:

By donating to Anglicare's Bushfire and Emergency Relief Appeal you will be supporting those who have been evacuated, injured, lost property, livelihoods or even loved ones.

**Monetary donations** – will be used to provide extra support to existing services and to create pathways for long-term recovery. You can donate directly at <https://www.anglicare.com.au/services/get-involved/appeals/bushfire-appeal-2020>.

**Food donations** – will be used to help families with immediate needs. Taking away the burden of grocery costs helps families to focus finances and attention on recovery and rebuilding. This is especially important for Anglicare's team of foster carers, some of whom have been forced to leave their homes while still providing care for already vulnerable and traumatised children.

Donations of non-perishable food and toiletries can be dropped off at the following Anglicare collection points:

- Anglicare office, 30 Scotts Crossing, Canberra
- Anglicare office, 6-12 Church St, Wagga Wagga
- Ashmont Community Resource Centre, 42 Tobruk St, Ashmont
- Anglicare office, 564 Olive St, Albury