



The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland

The Rt Revd Dr Richard Treloar
Bishop of Gippsland

A Pastoral Letter from Bishop Richard to be read at Sunday Services on 5 January 2020

To all clergy and people of the Diocese, and to those who may be seeking solace and comfort in our churches today: greetings.

It is with heavy hearts that we gather this Epiphany, at a time when so many of our brothers and sisters in east Gippsland are hurting.

St Paul reminds us that when one member of the body suffers, all the members of the body suffer with it (1 Cor 12:26); and so it is for our Diocese in these anxious and dark days since Christmas.

Our hearts and hands go out to the people of the eastern region in your grief and loss, as you seek to come to terms with the trauma you have faced and the devastation caused to lives and livelihoods, to property, stock, towns, and to the creation itself.

We acknowledge our feelings of helplessness in the face of such ferocious forces, notwithstanding the power of prayer, which has also been keenly and gratefully felt by those in harm's way.

We pay tribute to the work of our emergency services, the Country Fire Authority, and associated organisations whose workers and volunteers have stood in the breach to keep others safe.

We recognise the ministries of clergy and lay people in the east and across the Diocese who have responded to the immediate material and pastoral needs of evacuees and those returning to assess the damage to homes, businesses, and communities.

And we commit ourselves to a sustained relief effort, working within and beyond our churches with people of good will to support those most affected by the fires and their aftermath, and to rebuild hope where hope has been lost.

I convey the many – literally scores – of messages of concern and solidarity that have been sent to me this week from all around the Anglican Church of Australia – and indeed the wider Anglican Communion – including from Archbishop Kay Goldsworthy.

I will be communicating these in person at services in the east today, and on visits to the farthest eastern and northern reaches of the Diocese in the days and weeks ahead, as access is restored.

In the body of Christ we are never alone. Thus, alongside our prayers for Gippsland, we continue to uphold other parts of the country where there are fires or the threat of fires, and all who offer assistance in such challenging and complex conditions.

Your Archdeacons and I have been in regular communication this last week, along with the Regional Dean in the east, and we will be meeting with other members of Diocesan Staff tomorrow to further coordinate our actions and to seek appropriate expertise and other human and financial resources.

If you would like to contribute to an appeal, you can donate to the Diocese's Emergency Relief Fund (details are available from the Registry Office), or via the Anglicare Victoria website.

May the light of the one who is revealed to us as the Beloved in this season of Epiphany shine into the darkness of this crisis, and show us a way forward together as beloved children of God, whose heart is heavy for us and with us in him.

Grace and peace,