



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Bushfire Disaster Appeal Update



A floral tribute for victims of the bushfires - Photo: HWT

The Spirit of Generosity

In response to the devastating bushfires that have ravaged the state of Victoria in Australia's worst natural disaster, the Uniting Church, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's SHARE Appeals Unit launched a Bushfire Disaster Appeal at the request of the Uniting Church National Assembly.

As people saw the devastation of the fires on their television screens and in the newspaper, donations flooded in. To date the Bushfire Disaster Appeal has generated over \$1.5 million.

Director of Appeals, David Hickey said, "We have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of generosity and concern from all levels of the church. SHARE donors have once again responded in force and we have also been heartened by the significant support we have received from interstate individuals and congregations." To date over \$720,000 in funds have been allocated to practical and other support and ongoing counselling, however we all need to be there in the long haul ahead in the months and years to come.

Donate to the Bushfire Disaster Appeal - 1800 668 426, online at www.shareappeal.org.au or send a cheque to the SHARE Community Appeal.

Are you in it for the long haul? Pledge your support to the bushfire recovery process on an on-going basis. See back page for details.



Bushfire Disaster Appeal Update

Farm Fencing

Fences lost in the North East total a staggering 1923 kms. Volunteers are working to rebuild them. Teams are well organised and work long days. NSW rural chaplain Julie Greig coordinates the team with land owners. Riverina fencing teams from New South Wales have undertaken 230 hours of work. Funds from the bushfire appeal cover costs of daily food and drink. A team from Benalla/Dookie purchased a post driver and compressor to start fencing work in the Strath Creek area. After Easter students from Prince Alfred College in Adelaide are coming to help them. They will camp at the Seymour Uniting Church. Concern has arisen that people who are not registered farmers cannot get government assistance for fencing. The Uniting Church is taking this up with the Victorian government.

UnitingCare Wodonga

UnitingCare Wodonga developed a partnership with Kergunyah Uniting Church, the Upper Murray North East Drought Relief Distribution Group and rural supply organisations in the Kiewa/Myrtleford region to support families and people experiencing hardship and difficulty following the Beechworth – Myrtleford fire.



UnitingCare recruited the Upper North East Drought Relief Distribution Group, headed by Lindsay & Anne Jarvis from Kergunyah Uniting Church, to distribute vouchers to people in the fire affected area which could then be redeemed for the purchase of goods at selected rural supply stores in the region.

From the Bushfire Disaster Fund \$17,000 has been given to UnitingCare Wodonga to provide ongoing support and services to these isolated rural communities.

Yarra Yarra Efforts

Both ends of Yarra Yarra Presbytery have been badly affected, with Healesville, Marysville, Whittlesea and Kinglake requiring extra ministry resources.

Rev David Howie was immediately seconded to assist and was appointed as Bushfire area community minister for the fire affected areas.

King Lake West Uniting Church became a central hub for delivering food, government services and internet access. The congregation offered their small weatherboard church; one of the few buildings left standing and grounds as a community restaurant feeding up to 200 people a night. This site became the Kinglake community relief centre.



New life, Kinglake on Easter Sunday morning 2009.



Kildonan UnitingCare

Kildonan UnitingCare has been a major presence at the Whittlesea relief centre. Kildonan have been working with local agencies, Victoria Police, the City of Whittlesea, the Premiers Office, the State Emergency Service, the Uniting Church and UnitingCare networks, and their corporate partners about how Kildonan can assist in this sad and extensive tragedy.

In the short term, immediate support is available to families in the form of financial support for school books and uniforms and vouchers for groceries and mobile phone recharge cards. Kildonan's financial counselling team are available to provide support and assist people with putting affordable arrangements in place. Longer term assistance with financial counselling, ensuring people get assistance to their entitlements and developing strategies for financial stability will be Kildonan's key role.

Kildonan received \$38,500 from the Uniting Church Bushfire Disaster Fund to distribute in immediate relief and \$55,000 to provide on-going counselling services.



Bushfire Disaster Appeal Update

'Our Place'

'Our Place' is the name that has been given to the new post-emergency phase Bushfire Recovery and Community Assistance Centre in Eaglehawk, Bendigo. The 'Our Place' program was instigated after the Anglican Bishop of Bendigo, Bsp. Andrew Curnow's responded to the bushfires by seconding Rev Tracey Wolsley to the position of Community Chaplain in Bendigo.

Mobile Kindergarten



Broadmeadows UnitingCare's Mobile Kindergarten was deployed to the Whittlesea Kinglake area in response to the Victorian bushfires. The mobile kinder is operating two sessions – one in the morning and one in the afternoon - from the Kinglake Community Centre. Over twenty children attend regular sessions. It is being staffed by qualified kinder teachers including a teacher from Kinglake where the kinder was destroyed. Funding for this "new service" is sourced from The Victorian Government (DEECD) and the Uniting Church Bushfire Disaster Appeal.

In addition to these agencies, Kilmany UnitingCare, Wesley Mission Melbourne, UnitingCare Community Options, UnitingCare Moreland Hall and UnitingCare Connections are all providing case managers to the Victorian Bushfires Case Management Service. For more information see www.shareappeal.org.au



'Our Place' is an 'official' recovery centre and is a place to come and sit and talk and get immediate help. The Uniting Church Bushfire Disaster Appeal has committed \$50,000 to the ongoing running and coordination of "Our Place". Bendigo UnitingCare Outreach was involved at the outset in a partnership born of the bushfire emergency, providing immediate funds and resources and is now part of the advisory committee to the Chaplain. UnitingCare will have a continuing presence, providing experienced volunteers and expert advice and help in the management of 'Our Place.'

Big Red Bus

UnitingCare Cutting Edge backed out the "Big Red Bus" from their garage. After a make-over, the installation of six new laptops, a scanner and wireless laser printers from the Uniting Church Bushfire Disaster Appeal, and the provision of free internet access and a router from



Telstra, the Bus has been travelling through bush-fire affected areas making available services for those affected to keep in touch with loved ones. Self sufficient with power it was located up the mountain at Kinglake West from the first week. The Big Red Bus had a constant stream of visitors looking for internet access and printing facilities. The IT facilities were used for everything from internet banking, printing area maps, checking road closures, paying staff and staying in touch with friends and family. Recharging phones was also popular.

From its location at the Kinglake Community Relief Centre, the Big Red Bus supported volunteers at the Relief Centre to create a database to register goods donated, match donors with need and return calls. The use of the facilities on the Big Red Bus continued to grow over subsequent weeks until local residents re-established their essential communications.



Bushfire Disaster Appeal Update



He saved a church

A trip to Kinglake West is a trip to a tragic town, a tiny town tortured by fire. Seven people lost their lives. Evident everywhere is the amazing randomness of bushfire – spots of untouched green amid streets of devastation. One patch of green runs up against the Kinglake West Uniting Church. It is the only church left in the area. Tall gums, pine trees and ferns shelter it. A lawn come car park extends from one side.

It too is green. But the other side of the church is scarred and black. It wasn't divine intervention that saved this tiny spiritual home. The desperation of neighbour Eddie Sabljak kept the flames at bay. A long narrow stand of eucalypts, pines and scrub runs down behind the church, right up to his place. Mr Sabljak said it was a pitched battle, using all he had at hand. The battle continued through the day and night. "We all owe Eddie a lot," said a

Kinglake West parishioner. "He worked so hard to save our place of worship. If it wasn't for him we wouldn't be here [to worship] today". Help our neighbours! - Helping local business!

If you are thinking of buying trees or shrubs, buy direct from Eddie at Fern Acres Nursery and help his business survive this difficult time. Contact Eddie on 03 5786 5031 or www.fernacres.com.au

Yes! I would like to pledge my support of the Bushfire Disaster Appeal

Automatic Credit Card Deduction Authorisation

Faxback: 03 9251 5491 or Post: GPO Box 4355 Melbourne VIC 3001

I, _____, authorise the SHARE Community Appeal to automatically deduct

the value of \$ _____ every _____ month/s from my:

MASTERCARD

VISA

Card Number:

Exp: ____/____

until further written notice.

My donations will be used to support the bushfire recovery process.

The **first month** I would like these deductions to be made is _____ (month) _____ (year)

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Postal Address: _____

State: _____ Postcode: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____