



## PRIMATE OF AUSTRALIA

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### **Anglican Church gets mobile as donations pour in for bushfire victims**

The Anglican Parish of Whittlesea has been full lately – but it’s not just parishioners who are flocking to the church and the hall next door – it is people from all walks of life passionate about helping those in need, the victims of Australia’s worst bushfire tragedy.

Whittlesea is in the middle of Victoria’s fire zone and the local Anglican community, led by Parish Priest, the Reverend Stephen Holmes, has mobilized to do whatever it can to assist community members caught in a disaster that was swift and shocking.

The Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia, Archbishop Phillip Aspinall visited the Whittlesea community and bushfire victims this week. He was both saddened and uplifted by what he saw.

“This community has shown what spirit is all about. When I visited there was no way you could get to the altar in the church because the donated gifts were piled everywhere. The church hall was a hive of activity with well organized teams of people sorting a huge amount of donated goods for distribution to those most in need.

“I was very impressed by what I saw. Everyone was rolling up their sleeves and getting involved. People were constantly dropping in to deliver clothes, household goods and money...locals and strangers from far and wide simply arrived at the church asking Father Stephen Holmes if they could help and Stephen said “I wont turn anyone away.”

Father Stephen realized the need for urgent help on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> of February when the fire destroyed homes and lives in nearby Kinglake and surrounding areas.

“Our Op Shop in Whittlesea could not cope with the donations that began arriving so we arranged for goods to be left here at the Church...when the church and the hall began overflowing we knew we had to step up a gear. A kind donor delivered shipping crates which we have turned into mobile op shops to be delivered directly into the heart of the fire zone for distribution.”

With a growing volunteer work force the business community also chipped in with corporate donations as diverse as sandwiches and pizza to feed the workers, to toothpaste for the victims who were left with nothing.

“This community spirit doesn’t really surprise me. Everyone has been touched by this tragedy in some way but here in Whittlesea everyone knew someone who has either lost their life or their property, or who had miraculously escaped the flames.

“What we are trying to do here is provide not just a short term focus but a longer term assistance program. We want to ensure that survivors and their families are not forgotten. One idea is an educational fund to provide ongoing financial support for the children. The media will move on from this story but we will be around as a supportive and caring Anglican Community well into the future.”

During his visit Dr Aspinall launched the National Home Mission Fund Bushfire Appeal 2009, a fund to be used to sustain ministry and pastoral care in devastated communities over the next twelve to eighteen months. Archbishop Aspinall has called on Australians to support the Fund which is the Anglican Church of Australia's national organ for responding to missionary needs and natural disasters, particularly in rural Australia.

Dr Aspinall agreed the needs are not just short term. "It is vital that people be cared for in the medium and longer terms as they come to cope with their loss and begin the process of rebuilding. I have seen the devastation first hand. These are life changing events and as a church we need to provide ongoing support

"Governments, corporate Australia and generous individuals will provide the immediate needs of food, clothing and accommodation but it is the church that will provide the ongoing ministry and pastoral support in these devastated communities. I know Anglicans are playing their part in contributing to community appeals...I hope and trust they will also provide support for the ongoing ministry needs as well..

In addition to financial support Dr Aspinall is hoping to identify clergy who are able to offer their services to parishes in the worst-affected areas to ensure that pastoral ministry will be available to all who need it.

Donations to the National Home Mission Fund Bushfires Appeal 2009 can be made in one of two ways. First, cheques and money orders can be posted to:

The National Home Mission Fund Bushfire Appeal 2009  
c/o The Anglican Centre  
209 Flinders Lane  
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Donations can also be made electronically by direct transfer to the following account:  
Westpac Anglican Diocese Melbourne  
BSB – 033009  
Account Number – 00-0155.

Tax deductions are available for donations in excess of \$2.