

18 December 2024

Tena koutou katoa

By now most of you will have seen and heard the devastating news of the magnitude 7.3 earthquake that hit Vanuatu on Tuesday 17 December. The images are confronting. Our prayers go out to the people of Vanuatu and our partner church, Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV).

As I write, hundreds are reported injured and 14 dead, with the death toll predicted to rise as the rescue effort continues. This was a deadly earthquake and there will be many heartbreaking stories behind the growing statistics.

It is concerning to think of the limited capacity Vanuatu has to respond to an earthquake of this magnitude; the Vanuatu Government has declared a seven-day state of emergency and requested international support.

We can feel thankful that our government's response is that of a good neighbour, it has swiftly put plans in place to assess immediate needs with a view to supporting relief efforts.

The Church shares a close partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV) and this makes us particularly concerned for the welfare of all those who have been impacted, injured, for those living in uncertainty as they wait to hear from family and friends, and for all the members of the PCV.

Our Church's Global Mission Director Rev Phil King has reached out to PCV leaders but at this stage no information has been received as communications are down. We will update you on any injury to PCV members and their families, and any damage sustained to the PCV Assembly Office and its church buildings in Port Vila, when we have news.

I know that many of us have a deep affection for the people of Vanuatu, and a strong commitment to our partnership with the PCV, and will want to reach out and help. When the PCV is able to communicate to us what help and support is required, we will share this with you.

At this time, I ask you to give thought to the Vanuatu Recognised Seasonal Employment (RSE) workers in New Zealand who will have serious concerns for their families and friends back home. Some of our churches have good relationships with the RSE workers in their communities. Let us pray for them - the RSE workers and our congregations offering pastoral support at such a stressful time.



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I understand that so close to Christmas and after a difficult year some of us will be feeling financial strain. However, I also know there will be some among us who will want to make a donation towards relief efforts. At this stage, in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, specific details of relief and recovery needs are not available; when we know how you can assist, we will share these details.

For now, please uphold the nation of Vanuatu and the PCV in prayer, along with prayer for all those bereaved, injured and suffering, and all those involved in immediate relief efforts. For them it will be a very challenging Christmas.

Gracious God, at this time we recall the words Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it...' As part of the Body of Christ we pray for the people of Vanuatu at this challenging and frightening time. We pray that they will know the support of their friends around the world, that the bereaved will find comfort and strength and that the injured will receive medical help and care. Draw close to them all we pray O God, sustain them in their time of distress and grief and show us how we may help. We pray in the name of Jesus - the one who brings hope to our troubled world. Amen

In Christ
Rose

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