

# Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

## Response to Cyclone Pam



***Please read and distribute within your networks this Vanuatu update prepared for our Church by the Rev Phil King, Global Mission Coordinator.***

### **Background**

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, the Right Rev Andrew Norton visited Vanuatu with Global Mission Coordinator Rev Phil King the 19-24 April. The purpose of this was to pay a visit of solidarity and offer pastoral support to the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV) leadership and PCANZ volunteers working there, and to assess the most effective way the PCANZ can support the PCV in their recovery. This expression of support was greatly appreciated by the PCV.

The situation facing the nation of Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam is of an unprecedented scale. They have experienced cyclones before, but none as devastating as this. The impact has been far-reaching and will have long-lasting consequences. Many buildings have been destroyed and damaged. Infrastructure has been disrupted. Businesses and livelihoods, schools, health institutions and churches have been severely affected. In a nation as closely connected as Vanuatu, no one has escaped the impact. In some areas, the natural landscape has been stripped of all vegetation. Massive banyan trees centuries old have been ripped from the soil and lie exposed on the ground like carcasses, testimony to the terrifying force of Cyclone Pam. Livestock and birdlife have been affected as well. As it was after the Christchurch earthquake, everyone was involved, and everyone has a story; and once they start to share their stories the trauma of what they went through is seen and heard in the telling.

### **Needs**

The PCV is our primary international mission partner. It is the largest church in Vanuatu and has oversight of many schools and colleges. The PCV's Onesua College on Efate Island is a leading college with a proud history. Many of the nation's leaders have been educated there, including the current Prime Minister. The PCV also runs a highly respected community health programme and have a reach into all areas of Vanuatu life. The church has lost many buildings and many more have been severely damaged. As well as this, the income of many sectors of the population of Vanuatu has been affected due to the loss of livelihoods.



*Massive trees were ripped from the ground at Lenakel Presbyterian College on Tanna Island.*



*The Port Vila waterfront is unrecognisable.*

In a report in the Vanuatu Daily Post on April 24, the United Nations Development Programme estimates that the loss of food crops is as high as 96 per cent. This, combined with severe damage to sandalwood and coffee plantations has destroyed the main source of income for a majority of the population and could have a negative impact on Vanuatu's economic development for years to come. The Vanuatu Government Department of Labour released statistics estimating that approximately US\$7 million of personal income has been lost. The owner of Tanna Coffee said that it will be 18 months before he can see any potential for harvest, and that 500 growers have lost their entire incomes, with a further 5,000 indirectly affected. This economic impact will inevitably affect the PCV's ability to maintain the extensive ministry they have through their churches, colleges, schools and health programmes. Due to the size and role of the PCV in Vanuatu, their recovery is vital for the recovery of Vanuatu as a whole.



*The normally bustling Port Vila Market is virtually deserted.*

### **The Response – PCV**

The PCV responded quickly after the cyclone and set up a Disaster Relief Team in their Assembly Office. They have identified their needs in three key areas and have divided each of these in the following way:

- 1) Education: Student dormitory rebuilds; Teachers housing; School resources
- 2) Health: Health clinic rebuilds; Clinic resources; Health education
- 3) Parish life: Pastor housing; Churches and Women's Ministry buildings; Pastor salary relief.



The PCV is following a disaster management plan which is being overseen by Jonathan Tarip, the former principal of Onesua College and now the PCV education secretary. In this role Jonathan is also liaising with international partners. Richard Tatwin is managing the health department programme and has just negotiated a contract with the Government to deliver services throughout the country. Neville Jones, a PCANZ volunteer with the PCV, has been appointed as logistics manager for the relief team. Neville's history of logistics in the New Zealand army makes him the perfect appointment for this role, and he is doing an outstanding job.

### **The Response - International partners**

The PCV has other international partners they are working closely with, but the need is huge and each partner's help is needed. Our support will be of significant value in the overall international response. The Uniting Church of Australia, through their international partners programme UnitingWorld, funded a disaster response training event for pastors (this was taking place in Port Vila while we were there). This event allowed the PCV to gather pastors, presbytery clerks and school principals from throughout Vanuatu to hear reports from affected areas and further enhance the management of their relief effort. The timing of this meeting was ideal for us as it enabled us to meet many church and school leaders at one time. We will liaise with Jonathan Tarip to ensure that we are aware of the input of the PCV's international partners.

### **The Response – PCANZ**

**Moderator's Appeal** - The PCANZ is responding in a variety of ways. The first is by raising funds through the Moderator's Appeal, and we urge congregations, Presbyterian Church schools and individuals to continue to fundraise for this as the need is ongoing. Funds will be distributed to the PCV and applied according to the priority areas named above. One of the first ways in which we will be helping is donating funds towards the rebuilding of staff housing at Onesua College. As many as 13 of the college's 26 staff are in temporary housing because several staff houses were destroyed and others severely damaged. Rebuilding staff houses is a priority to enable the college to return to full capacity. Other rebuild projects will also be funded.



*Takara Village church. Villagers had to flee for their lives when it collapsed.*

**PCANZ Volunteer Staff** - A second way we are responding is by supporting our PCANZ volunteer staff who are working with the PCV. Neville and Gloria Jones are living in Sutherland House, a PCV-owned house of four flats, used for temporary accommodation by pastors and visiting guests. They are willing to host PCANZ members visiting on short-term PCV relief trips. The house needs some repairs to make it more suitable for long-term accommodation. We will encourage donations to be given towards this, and Neville will coordinate work teams. Graeme and Maebry Reid are assisting at Onesua College and Seaside School. They are currently living with the Jones's at Sutherland House, but if they are able to return to Onesua their accommodation will also need upgrading and we will support this.



*Principal Graham Kalmar in front of his house at Onesua College. Several staff houses were destroyed.*

**Tradespeople and Labourers** - We will coordinate work parties to assist with rebuild projects. Several projects supported by PCANZ congregations are already underway or about to start on Efate, Santo, Paama and Ambrym Islands. There are further opportunities to assist with these, or in other areas of need such as on Tanna Island which was particularly badly hit. Trades-people and labourers are needed to volunteer their time, and fund their travel costs. Please note, if you join a work party conditions will be basic so team members will need to be prepared for this. Congregations and individuals who would like to offer their services for rebuild projects are invited to contact Phil King ([phil@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:phil@presbyterian.org.nz)) to discuss options.

**Health Professionals Needed** - Health and education professionals are invited to consider a time of volunteer service. The PCV has won a contract to provide health programmes throughout Vanuatu and will require doctors, dentists and optometrists to serve on these programmes. There are growing concerns about health issues caused by poor water and sanitation facilities, and there are opportunities for New Zealanders to be involved. Gloria Jones is serving as a dental technician on this programme and other PCANZ members are invited to offer their services. Volunteer teachers will also be welcomed at any of the PCV-managed schools. We cannot over-emphasise the value of encouragement that overseas staff can bring at a time like this.

### **Church Schools**

The PCV manages several church schools. Some of our church schools have already raised funds for Onesua College, which suffered extensive damage, but there are several others; Lenakel College on Tanna has been very badly hit and Vaum Junior Secondary School on Paama has lost classrooms and resources, as has Napangasale Presbyterian College on Tongoa. Phil King will discuss a coordinated response to these needs with PCANZ church schools.



### **The Process**

To offer your support to Vanuatu contact Phil to discuss options for service. Phil will liaise with Jonathan Tarip and Neville Jones in Vanuatu to arrange the various projects and appointments. Project team leaders will be appointed and teams established in consultation with Global Mission and the PCV to ensure needs are being met according to the PCV's priorities. The PCV has established a dedicated emergency relief fund, and a fund manager has been appointed to oversee this. He will account for donated funds and report on the outcomes of these funds to Global Mission.



*The Deputy Principal at Lenakel College in front of the house he and his family are still living in.*

### **Sense of Hope**

Despite the massive task that lies ahead, there is a sense of hope within the PCV and nation of Vanuatu as a whole. These are resilient people who have already begun the task of re-building their communities and livelihoods. Perhaps the most inspiring story we heard was of the leadership of Graham Kalmar, principal of Onesua College. The damage at the college was extensive and the emotional impact on all who experienced it was immense. Graham himself survived the cyclone with his family sheltering in the only room in their house that had a roof over it - they huddled on a table as the rising seawater lapped around their feet. Outside, they could see 260kmh winds tossing trees and corrugated iron like missiles around the campus. Once the cyclone passed all communications were down and roads were impassable. But after a few days, still reeling from the impact, Graham called staff and students together and said, "We have all experienced a terrible disaster. We have all lost a great deal. But the time for grieving is over. Today we must clean up our own homes. And tomorrow we must begin cleaning up the school. Life must go on." He led them in prayer and they began to clear up the debris. This kind of leadership is evident throughout Vanuatu as communities support each other during this fragile time of recovery. The financial, spiritual, practical and emotional assistance of their overseas friends will be invaluable to them as they walk this journey.

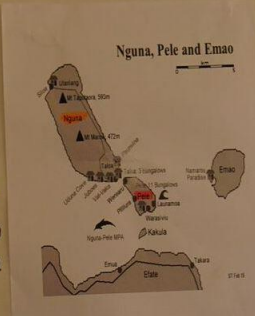


*A return to routine is important for children to overcome the trauma of the cyclone.*

## Moderator's Appeal

Session:  
Church building:  
Manse (Pastor's house):  
Transit house:  
Pwmu house:  
Water tank:  
Well:

### EFA TE PRESBYTERY



**Damaged from PAM:**

- Malorua Session**
  - (1) LELEPA ISL.: Church building:
    - Water Spouts & Clips → 3 pcs 5m
    - Pwmu: Roof → 4 x 4 m 27"
    - Window → 40 m (smooth Kapa)
    - Timber → 5 x 5 @ 5m
    - Ridging → 4 x 3 m / Flasing 4 x 4 m 2
    - Faser board → 4 x 4 m 50" (15 x 3)
  - RONGORONGOWIA:** (1) Mosso / Tasiriki (church b)
    - Roof: 10 pcs x 4 m
  - (2) Mosso / Sunai: Roof → 25 pcs x 5 m (Church building)
  - (3) Emua: (Church building) Louves → 10
  - (4) Siviri: Manse Roof → 10 pcs x 4 m
- (4) Newora (Nguna) (semi-permanent)
  - Church: 15 x 9 m Completely Destroyed
- (6) Mere (Nguna) - Church (semi-permanent)
  - Timber → 3 x 2.50 m
  - Louvre → 8 sets of 8 blades
  - Fraser board → 6 x 6 m
  - Floor → 2 tons cement
- (7) Matoa (Nguna) - Church (permanent)
  - Roof → 4 x 4.80 m
  - timber → 1 x 2.80 m
  - Louvre → 7 Louvres
  - Faser board → 2 pcs x 4 m
- (8) Rewoka (Nguna) - CHURCH (permanent)
  - Louvres → 8 sets x 8 blades
  - Faser board → 2 lenght x 4 m
- (9) Farealapa (Nguna) - Church (permanent)
  - Roof → Fully damaged 12 m x 7 m
  - Timber (door) → 2 x 2.80 m (3.80 m)
  - Louvre glass → 6 Louvres
- (10) TALOA (Nguna)

*Damage recorded to PCV property on Efate Island.*

**On behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, thank you to all who have donated to the Moderator's Appeal for Vanuatu.**

At the time of writing, the appeal fund has reached \$94,700. So far, \$17,000 has been sent to the PCV for the repair of buildings at Onesua College, and for repair of church buildings and pastor's houses throughout Efate Island. Funds will continue to be released as projects are managed. Congregations, church schools and individuals are urged to continue supporting the appeal and where applicable, offer their time and talents to assist the PCV in their disaster recovery effort. Donations can be made directly by making a deposit into the PCANZ bank account (see your parish treasurer or email Katrina Graham, [katrina@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:katrina@presbyterian.org.nz) for bank account details). Also email Katrina if you require a receipt.

Cheques can be sent to: Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific Vision Vanuatu Fund, PO Box 9049, Te Aro, Wellington 6141

Please continue to pray for the PCV and the people of Vanuatu as they rebuild their communities in the wake of Cyclone Pam, the most devastating cyclone ever to hit the beautiful but fragile island nation of Vanuatu. If there are any other ways you would like to respond that are not mentioned in this report please contact me, [phil@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:phil@presbyterian.org.nz)



*Onesua College principal Graham Kalmar and PCANZ Moderator Andrew Norton. This classroom has already had its roof replaced, thanks to funds sent from PCANZ and St Andrews College.*