

Tropical Cyclone Gita: Anglican Missions Emergency Appeal

Anglican Missions is launching an Emergency Appeal in support of the Anglican Church in Tonga and its work in assisting with the response to Tropical Cyclone Gita, the most severe cyclone to hit Tonga in over 60 years.

Anticipating the force of the storm, the Government of Tonga declared a State of Emergency yesterday, about 12 hours before the cyclone actually hit. People were encouraged to prepare and churches and church facilities across the country were pressed into use as evacuation centres. With sustained wind speeds of 230kmh gusting to 275kmh, photos from the Tongan capital Nuku'alofa show heavy damage to infrastructure and some larger buildings, including the Parliament buildings, roofs torn off houses, trees knocked over and churches badly damaged. Graham Kenna of Tonga's National Emergency Management Office told Radio New Zealand on 13 February that every house in Nuku'alofa had been damaged in some way.

Tonga's Anglican Bishop, the Rt Rev 'Afa Vaka, invited at-risk families to seek shelter in Church halls throughout Tongatapu, including St Paul's in Nuku'alofa. Before the cyclone hit, the Youth of All Saints Church in Fasi used the Community Integrated Vulnerability Assessment (CIVA) toolkit to identify vulnerable families, including those living in flood prone areas and those living in houses that are not structurally sound. Funding from Anglican Missions will be used to assist the Tonga Episcopal Unit to support families in need following this significant event and we continue to talk with relevant partners here in New Zealand and Australia (including Anglican Overseas Aid and Anglican Board of Missions) to ensure coordination of response and recovery efforts.

Tropical Cyclone Gita caused damage in Samoa last weekend and some funding from this Appeal could be allocated to support the Church in Samoa should there be sufficient need.

Your prayers for the people of Samoa and Tonga are very much appreciated. If you or your parish would like donate to this Appeal, please refer to our website. If you have any questions, please contact the Anglican Missions Office: email info@angmissions.org.nz, phone (04 473 5172) or mobile (021 913 219).