



World Council of Churches

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To: The National Council of Churches in
Australia and the Member Churches of the
World Council of Churches in Australia

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*I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
Psalm 121:1-2*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Throughout the Advent and Christmas season, and at the dawn of a new year and a new decade, the smoke from the catastrophic fires in many parts of Australia has darkened the horizon and dimmed any celebration.

Together with you, WCC member churches around the world are praying for respite from the heat and the flames, for the protection and encouragement of all those fighting the advancing fires, for the preservation of peoples' lives and properties, and of the unique wildlife and environment threatened with destruction. Together with you, we lament the unimaginable losses already suffered – of precious human lives, of homes and livelihoods, of so many animals and so much bushland and forest, and of so many affected communities' sense of security.

We pray for all the victims, and for their families and communities, that they may be comforted in their loss and strengthened by the solidarity of so many people around the world. We pray for the firefighting services and governmental authorities, that they may find the needed resources, strength and resolve to confront this crisis. And we pray for you, the churches and church leaders of Australia, as you seek to find the words and the means to provide support to those who need it, in a time of such deep bereavement and anxiety.

Australia has, since time immemorial, been accustomed to fire and to drought. However, the unprecedented scale and intensity of the current crisis will require, in due course, deep reflection on the factors leading to this exceptional disaster, accountability for those whose actions or inactions have imperilled so many people and contributed to the destruction of so much natural heritage, and measures to mitigate recurrence on such a scale and to adapt to a rapidly changing climate. The churches must play their role in this regard too.

In the meantime, I write to assure you of the World Council of Churches' accompaniment in the immediate crisis, and as your nation seeks unity in facing this terrible challenge.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit