

## **LIFE AFTER THE FIRES**

### ***You will need:***

- *A large green cloth*
- *People invited to bring images or symbols of anything they feel that they have lost e.g. particular people if anyone died, photos of their homes before the fire, children's drawings of the wildlife, leaf-covered branches and flowers, the names on cards of any precious possessions which they lost, and anything else which reminds them of life before the fires.*

*If the service is held outside the fire area, images of fire and sadness (maybe taken from photos in the media) can be used.*

- *Some people invited to be prepared to tell their stories.*
- *A supply of cut flowers or, if possible, green cuttings from bushland trees which have not been burnt.*

### **WE ARE GATHERED**

We are the people  
who face life after the fires.  
We are those whose lives  
will never be quite the same again.

We are gathered here to grieve,  
to claim the ground of our lives in a new way,  
to support each other  
and to be part of the creation of the future.

***The Christ who has walked the way of human pain  
will be with us here,  
weeping within our tears  
and holding us in love.***

### **WE REMEMBER**

Let us remember this country as it was  
and our lives as they were  
before the fires.  
Let us place our symbols here  
in loving memory of our world as it was then,  
when the greenness surrounded us  
and the bush creatures and birds were our companions,  
and life felt safe for us all:

*The green cloth is spread down the aisle and the people place  
The memories which they have placed on the cloth (see above).*

### **TELLING THE STORY**

Let us share the stories  
of what happened to us during the fires:  
*People share their experiences  
This can be done in different ways if appropriate -*

*in story, in poetry, in song*

## **THE GRIEVING**

This is the truth.

Our lives will never be quite the same again,  
even though we will journey on together.

The stories have been shared  
and yet no words or images  
can ever really capture or express what we have lost.

While we play this quiet music,  
let us grieve all those things which are no more,  
which have been damaged,  
or which will be a loss for us for some time to come.

*Music is played*

We will hold in love all that is gone from us  
with respect, with honour, with tenderness and with grief.

We will gather its beauty into our good memories  
to carry with us into the future.

Now, in the silence, let us reach out  
to touch the heart of a God  
who waits to comfort us.

*A silence is kept*

O God, as our Loving Parent,  
we believe that you are with us now.

***Amen.***

## **READINGS**

### **REFLECTION (Homily)**

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

O God, life is often so painfully ambiguous.

When tragedy strikes, we sometimes cannot help  
but anxiously ask what we have done to deserve this.

We pray today that we will know with confidence  
that you would never wish fires of destruction upon us.

Embrace us in ways which restore our faith  
and which help us to live, in confidence,  
with the awesome freedom of your creation  
rather than imagining a punishing God.

***Send us your Holy Spirit this day  
with gifts of wisdom, healing and comfort, we pray.***

We especially remember before you these people and situations:

*The people pray*

Show us ways of caring for all those who grieve and suffer, O God,  
and open our lives to share what we have with those in need.

*Renew us for the days to come,  
that we may lift up our heads and begin again in hope.  
This we pray in faith.*

*Amen.*

### **THE AFFIRMATION**

In the power of a loving God,  
we will survive the future,  
as we have the past,  
and in the same spirit with which we faced the fires.

*A song could be sung, a poem read*

In a silent moment,  
let us bring to mind what we see among us  
which will carry us forward in faith:

*A silence is kept*

Now let us take these green leaves (or flowers),  
name what we see among us for our future survival and strength  
and place them over the symbols of our past.

Let us place them gently  
as a covering of peace over that which we have lost.  
Let us place them in confidence as signs of the renewing of our life.

*The people do so*

### **LET US GO OUT**

As the bush springs green again,  
restoring its beauty to us as a gift,  
as the seeds are broken open by the fire  
for the beginning of new life,  
and as we bring together all that is among us  
for the future in this place:

let us go from here,  
stronger than when we came,  
holding on to those who have lost the most,  
ready for all that is to come  
and walking firmly into a new day.

Let us go in courage, hope and peace,  
surrounded by the love of God.

### **BLESSING**

And may the God who never leaves us nor forsakes us be with us,  
the Christ, who wept for the loss of a friend, walk before us  
and the Holy Spirit heal us and bring us a new dream.

*Amen.*

*With love and prayers from Dorothy McRae-McMahon*