

### **How long, O Lord?**

Every day, I see images and hear stories of the devastating bushfires in Australia. Raging fires, blackened forests, burned-out homes, ash-filled skies, scarred animals, traumatized children and communities.

I am filled with sorrow, my soul is heavy with grief.

How long will the fires last, O Lord?

How long will the destruction and death continue?

Where are you, God?

I am sad, O God.

I grieve for the loss of human life, of homes, animals, plants and trees, and the scarring of the earth. I am saddened for the original custodians of the land, the First Peoples of Australia, and the poor and marginalized disproportionately affected by the fires. As Jesus wept for Jerusalem and the coming destruction of the temple, I weep for Australia and the destruction of this sacred land.

### **Turn my sadness into compassion.**

I am fearful, O God.

I am afraid because these fires are out of my control. I feel helpless and small. When will this torment end? How many lives will be affected by the fires? There is no end in sight. Will relief ever come?

### **Turn my fear into hope.**

I am angry, O God.

I look for someone to blame. Whose fault is this? Scientists have warned for decades of the dangers of climate change, yet our leaders sit idly by, making promises with little to show in action. I am even angry with you, God. Can't you stop the fires by some miracle? Are you even listening? I know that pointing fingers will not help, but I am upset.

### **Turn my anger into resolve.**

I am ashamed, O God.

Am I partly to blame for these fires? I hold tightly to my comforts and conveniences which contribute to higher carbon levels in the atmosphere. I am ashamed because I do not know how to help.

### **Turn my shame into healing.**

I am grateful, O God.

I am thankful for the firefighters who work tirelessly to protect your people and all creation; for the volunteers and those who donate money, supplies and their own homes to assist those in need; for the "good news stories" which spark hope. I am grateful for the rain when it comes.

### **Turn my gratitude into action.**

How long, O Lord, how long?

I cry to you in my helplessness as I witness the tragedy unfolding in the Great Southland of the Holy Spirit.

*Come, Holy Spirit, Enkindle in us the fire of your love fill the hearts of your people and renew the face of the earth.*

### **Instead of bushfires, come with the fire of your love, Holy Spirit.**

Fill us with compassion and mercy to stand with our sisters and brothers affected by the fires. Give us strength to join in their suffering and bear witness to their pain.

Instead of the driving winds that add fuel to the fires, come as a gentle breath.

Bring fresh air to drive away the toxic fumes and ashen skies. Breathe new life into us, inspire us with love to care for one another and the earth.

**Come, Holy Spirit, as a refreshing rain.**

Open the heavens, quench the flames, heal the parched land and nourish our souls, renew the face of the earth.

Come, Holy Spirit, with the peace of a dove.

Calm our anxieties and fear. Lead us from the temptation to blame one another and become divided. May we be bearers of peace.

**Come as a balm, Holy Spirit.**

Anoint and soothe the wounds of the victims, seen and unseen. May we be balm to one another.

Be our Advocate, Holy Spirit.

Listen to our inward groaning and give us words to speak in places of power. Speak through us that we may be prophets of love amid the kingdoms of selfishness and greed; that we may speak hope in times of despair.

**Veni, Creator Spiritus!**

Heal the land. Heal our hearts. Make us new again.

To you, O God, I entrust my sorrow, my fears, my anguish, as well as the people, the flora and fauna, the land of Australia.

Help me to find consolation and be grateful for the many gifts and joys present in the midst of this tragedy.

**Reveal to me the path of life.**

**Fill me with love, guide me in hope, and lead me to act with mercy and compassion.**

**Amen**