

Tutu report, Fr Mc Verry, 27 02 15

To the friends of Tutu,

Kind greetings and thankyou, thankyou, thankyou, for your letters of kindness, prayer, encouragement, and various offers of assistance at this time of heartbreak. So, so much appreciated as we steel ourselves to stand up again in light of the litany of devastation resulting from Winston.

We came back on internet at midday today and so have just read all your emails and hasten to respond and let you know we are all OK..

The cyclone itself was most frightening and terrifying in force last Saturday and South Taveuni has lost 90% of all buildings and 100% of crops including an enormous amount of coconut trees. Usually the fruit is lost for up to the next two years, but this cyclone broke many in half and beheaded many others. People talked of a tidal wave as high as the coconuts and the devastation supports that as the sea came in well over 60 metres. It broke the wharf in half so that the two halves of concrete are 50 metres apart. Fortunately Winston arrived during the early morning when it was light and left quickly again before it was dark in the evening. Unfortunately he came at us from behind in the morning and then turned and was directly from the sea later on.

We met on Sunday and planned our response so Monday morning saw the 24 families sitting together at 8 a.m. and arranged into groups with various tasks for the cleanup. 4.30 p.m. group leaders reported back and planned the next day. It is a blessing to have many chain saws from the sawmilling section. We still continue on that programme and will into next week. The morale and spirit of working together rebuilds us as we go beyond the sight of glaring at and picking up the wreckage. Getting the road opened to the dam, temporary fix on pipes means we have access, water, and light as the hydro continued on right through the cyclone as our lines are all underground. However much work during this week for the electrician with water in many connections. Many others in Taveuni have brought food to keep in ice box here as public power is still not restored in the township. Tutu was and remains a government evacuation centre for those around us. Harvesting of yagona is possible through the hot air driers at the hydro and that continues on day and night. All houses get flooded in a cyclone but this time we lost buildings and staff have had to move into course participant buildings. Fortunately our young farmers went home the day before Winston arrived.

No one died here in Tutu but Lani's sister had her arm cut right off by flying roofing iron and subsequently died, and Wane's brother was also struck by roofing iron and killed. Being unable to go and be with family at time of bereavement weighs heavy but support from immediate Tutu community is consoling.

I see so many emails of support and and prayer and hasten to send out this general letter to express our deep appreciation and thanks for your love and prayers. We hope to carry on with all courses even if their schedule is set back a little, and work together with the rich soil of Taveuni in rebuilding the fruitful and beautiful garden it was... and hopefully will be again.

Thankyou, thankyou, thankyou,

Fr Mike and Tutu community.