



Cyclone Gabrielle

Impact report



This report covers the stories and success of the Anglican response to Cyclone Gabrielle.



Response Summary

Mark Mitchell, Humanitarian and Development Manager

In February 2023, Cyclone Gabrielle devastated communities across Northland, Auckland, and the East Coast of New Zealand. The destruction caused by the cyclone highlighted the increasing risks posed by climate change, with heavier rainfall, more frequent storms, and rising sea levels threatening vulnerable communities across the country.

In the face of these challenges, the Anglican Church across Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia came together in an unprecedented act of collective action under the banner of Hapaitia. This initiative, spanning all three tikanga of the Church, was a powerful demonstration of unity, mobilising resources, volunteers, and expertise to respond to the crisis.

Anglican Missions played a key role in receiving and distributing funds, ensuring they reached the communities and organisations most affected. Additionally, Anglican Missions worked to coordinate direct support for churches, marae, and other community hubs that became lifelines during the storms.

This response marked a significant milestone for the Anglican Church's engagement in disaster response, as it was the first time collective action of this scale had been undertaken. Now, two years after the event, the Anglican Response has closed, with a number of success stories that you can read about in this report. These stories show the critical role of churches and civil society organisations in responding to disasters. These entities are often best placed to mobilise local resources, provide immediate relief, and foster long-term recovery in the aftermath of such events.

As New Zealand continues to grapple with the growing impacts of climate change, the experience of responding to Cyclone Gabrielle reinforces the importance of strengthening partnerships between faith-based organisations, government, and the wider community. It also highlights the value of equipping the Church to lead local resilience and response efforts in future emergencies.

Hapaitia Projects Summary

Quick figures



28

Projects completed

2000

Households supported

Representing approximately 10,000 people

\$65k

**Towards preserving
Tikanga Māori culture
and taonga**

\$10k-\$15k

**Average project funding
amount**

Youth Room Re-Establishment

Auckland Diocese

When Cyclone Gabrielle descended upon Aotearoa New Zealand, the youth room at St Aidan's became one of the many buildings damaged by floodwaters. Instead of waiting for others to step in, the young people of St Aidan's took autonomy over the situation, transforming the setback into an opportunity for change.

Their response embodied the words of 1 Timothy 4:12: ***“Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers...”***

Putting all their dreams for the room into a practical plan of action, the youth group also reached out to the wider parish for support – and the church family rallied.

Paint supplies were donated, accompanied by home-baked goods to fuel energy levels for the DIY effort. Volunteers turned up during working bees to lend extra hands.

Through long hours of painting, cleaning, and problem-solving, the young people of St Aidan's came closer together. Navigating the ups and downs of the process, the youth were inspired with new confidence and responsibility.

The young people of St Aidan's took autonomy over the situation

”

St Aidan's Church is especially thankful to Anglican Missions for the funding that made this project a reality.

Through your donations, the St Aidan's youth room was re-established as a place they can call their own, supporting the growth of the next generation.





“
The youth were inspired with new **confidence** and **responsibility**”

St Paul's Anglican Church Ruakākā Repairs

Cyclone Gabrielle left its mark on many places, but for St Paul's Anglican Church in Ruakākā, the damage was extensive. The storm battered the church's roof, gutters, and spouting, leaving the beloved community space damp and deteriorating.

Inside, a wet rot had intruded through doors and windows, and the structure — once a place of worship — was rendered close to inhospitable. Yet, even in these conditions, services continued. The church hall remained a hub for the local community.

However, the cyclone brought more than just structural damage. For a beachfront community like Ruakākā, reliable shelters are fewer and rarer than they should be. This realisation brought conviction to the idea of positioning St Paul's as a much-needed refuge for future storms.

With Hapaitia funding, the church restored the roof, gutters, and spouting, along with damaged door frames and windows. Existing mould was treated, and the inside ceilings and walls were given a fresh coat of paint to freshen up the walls and prevent further damage.



... the structure was rendered close to inhospitable.

”



... the repairs
instilled a sense of
pride in their
church. ”



Alongside their \$10,000 Hapaitia grant, St Paul's secured an additional \$4,000 from a local community fund to ensure they could complete the work properly.

Putting Romans 12:5 into action, the many members making up the body of Ruakākā's community rolled up their sleeves, with hundreds of hours of work dedicated to making their building a resilient and safe shelter.

These repairs symbolised more than a physical renewal; it instilled a sense of pride in what their church can offer.

St Paul's is incredibly grateful to Anglican Missions for making this journey possible, and for empowering the church to reach out to its community. This project is also the first phase of a multi-part project to make the building more resilient and prepared for future emergencies.



Holy Trinity Parish Hall Emergency Resilience

Auckland Diocese

Kaipara District was one of the first places to be hit by Cyclone Gabrielle. Throughout the floodwaters, landslides and fallen trees, Holy Trinity Anglican Church's 112-year-old parish hall became an unexpected but live-saving rock in the storm.

Perched on a hilltop above the flood zone, it was designated by Civil Defence as the Emergency Evacuation Centre for the Northern Wairoa community. For four days, the hall became more than just a place to evacuate to - it became a sanctuary.

About 80 evacuees arrived, many wet, cold, and shaken. Vicar Frank Nelson and a team of parishioners and volunteers worked tirelessly alongside Amanda Bennett of the Kaipara District Council and Laura Exton of Northland Regional Council to meet their needs.

Together, they provided essential supplies, and constant updates on the evolving weather. While some evacuees moved on quickly to stay with friends or family, others found refuge in the hall until it was safe to leave.

Reverend Nelson's efforts didn't end at the hall's doors. He shared the story of this small, resilient district with local and global media, offering a firsthand account of how a community pulled together in the face of Cyclone Gabrielle.



The hall became
a **sanctuary** ”

“

It became clear that the parish could not bear the **cost of repairs**

The disaster showed the juxtaposition of nature’s destructive power and the good that emerges when communities unite to protect the vulnerable.

Following the cyclone, the success of the parish hall as a makeshift evacuation centre led to its formal designation as the district’s “go-to” venue for future emergency events. However, this brought to light some long-standing issues with the building itself.

Despite its sturdy history, the hall was showing its age. Weather-tightness was a growing concern, with leaks in roof flashings, rotting wooden windows, and damaged soffits where birds had found their sanctuary as well.

Outdated electrical systems also threatened the reliability of heating, lighting, and hot water – critical during emergencies. Once these vulnerabilities were identified, it became clear that the parish could not bear the cost of repairs.



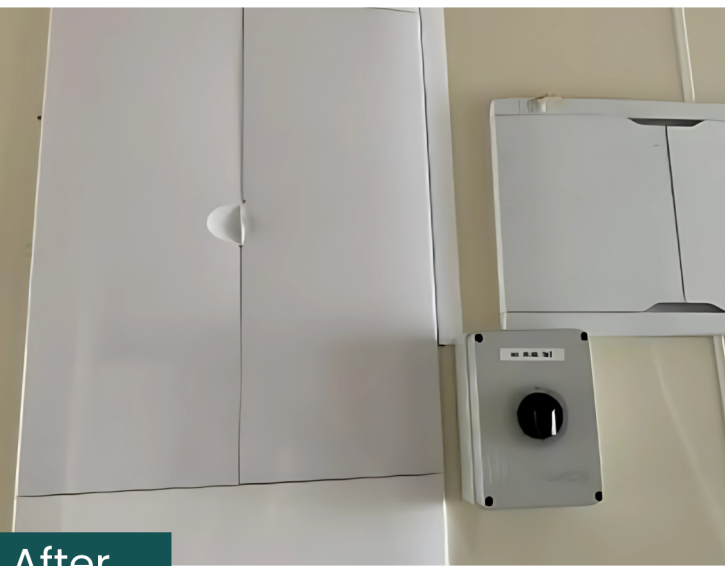
Before

After





Before



After

Their answer came through the Anglican Missions' Hāpaitia funding. The grant arrived at a crucial time, offering the necessary support to restore the building and ensure its long-term safety.

Elderly parishioners, some of whom have witnessed 80 years of transformation at Holy Trinity, have shared their heartfelt appreciation for the enhancements. Their sentiments reflect more than just contentment; the Hall now provides both spiritual nourishment and security for their congregation.

Cyclone Gabrielle has marked another significant chapter in Holy Trinity's extensive history, but thanks to your generous donations, it has emerged as a beacon of hope for the Kaipara District, ready to face any storms that may come.



... Their Hall is now serving its congregation with both **spiritual nourishment** and **security**.



All projects funded



St Aidan's Church Roof Restoration & Youth Room Re-Establishment

To re-establish useful and viable areas for groups to use.

St Jude's Belfry & Spire Cross Repair

Repair damage caused by Cyclone Gabrielle

Northwest Anglican Church Repairs

To ensure the church building is safe for ongoing future use without constant need for repairs and therefore cost.

Coromandel Anglican Church Repairs

Ensure weather tightness and prevent deterioration of the church structure.



St Paul's Roof Repairs

To create a watertight church that does not leak during rainfall

Te Karaiti Te Aranga Church Roof Repairs

Repair leaks to allow continued use of Te Karaiti te Aranga Church

St Francis Church Generator

To support the Community Response Group by providing pastoral care.

St Michael's Building Resilience Project

To support recovery from the damage caused to the church building and build resilience into the building to make it watertight, enabling use by the church community, other community groups and outreach programmes.

Psychosocial and Trauma Recovery

To enable people emotionally or psychologically traumatised by Cyclone Gabrielle to recover and get back on their feet.

Pakowhai Support Fund

To provide support for those without any and create a resilient community

Flying Ferris

To allow Rev Connie Ferris to continue to meet the ministry and pastoral needs of Tairāwhiti whānau and communities in the most remote areas.

**Eskdale War Memorial Church Grounds
Restoration Project**

Community resilience through restoration

Stormbirds Programme

To train at least 10 Companions to facilitate the delivery of the Stormbirds programme in as many schools as possible with the funding available in Term 3 & Term 4 2023. This will contribute greatly to improving children's wellbeing and resilience overall.

**Mihaia Church Critical Repairs Feasibility
Study**

To improve community resilience, community wellbeing, manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga.

**Manaaki Awhi Aroha ki nga kohine o
Hukarere**

To have all Kohine of Hukarere supported with their mental wellbeing post cyclone so that they are able to focus on their educational needs, and to build on their resilience and have skills and tools to help with coping and dealing with anxieties and stressors.

**Upgrading & Floodproofing of St Alban
The Martyr**

Avoidance of future basement flooding.



**Holy Trinity Parish Hall Emergency
Resilience**

To ensure that the Parish Hall is a safe and water tight building fit-for-purpose as a Civil Defence Centre emergency evacuation shelter for the people of Dargaville and its surrounding districts.

Restoration of Takapau Arero Urupa

To restore and future proof our urupa for future use, whilst preserving those of our tipuna already laying there.

**St Paul's Anglican Church Ruakākā
Repairs**

To return the church and church hall to a fully functional and safe standard following water and wind damage

Support for Displaced from Te Karaka

To provide pastoral support and gathering place and space, of people displaced from the homes.

Drainage Work at Dominion Road	To avoid any further flooding of the house in the future.
Protection of Taonga Tuku Iho	Future proofing and protection of taonga (the whare tupuna is 109 years old)
South Kaipara Community Emergency Response Preparedness	Improve community resilience and provide a fit for purpose emergency centre for the Helensville area.
Kaukapakapa Community Emergency Response Preparedness	To improve community resilience and provide a fit for purpose emergency area for the Kaukapakapa area.
Hukarere Girls' College	To re-establish the learning and living environment for the Kohine displaced by Cyclone Gabrielle
Holy Trinity Roof & Ceiling Repair	To make a church room habitable again
Cyclone Gabrielle Medium Term Response	To preserve Tikanga culture and identity in Te Tairāwhiti.
Evacuation Centre Resilience Project	Improved capability at newly designated evacuation centre for Te Hui Amorangi ki Te Tairāwhiti as part of a Diocesan response to resilience development. Increase life sustaining capabilities and improved community resilience.
Support for Displaced from Te Karaka	To provide pastoral support and gathering place and space, of people displaced from the homes.

Acknowledgements

The success of this response would not have been possible without the partnership and generous contributions from individuals and organisations worldwide, including every day people who donated generously to help those in desperate need.

To every person who donated, prayed for and supported this appeal - thank you.



There's so much more left to do. We're relying on your continued support, both financially and in prayer and advocacy to put the love of God into action. Head to our website to learn more about our other projects that support those affected by climate related disasters and emergencies.



Contact

Anglican Missions
32 Mulgrave Street
Pipitea
Wellington 6011

www.anglicanmissions.org.nz
info@anglicanmissions.org.nz