



16 Days Devotional

25th November- 10th December
Volume I - 16 Days of Activism

Table of Content

Acknowledgements	2
Background of 16 Days of Activism	3
Introduction	4
Female - Male: Both Created in the Image of God	5
Stand In What You Believe	6
A Voice Calling for Help	8
A View into an Example of Christ-Culture Encounter	9
The Future Begins in the Family	11
Liberation and Redemption	13
Te Awa Tapu: He tapu o te wāhine!	16
Liberation and Redemption	18
Living Hope	19
Abuse of Power Abuse against Women	20
Criticized by the World and yet Highly Commended and Honoured by Jesus	21
The Power of Vulnerability	22
Faith Breaks Silence and Restores Hope in Christ	23
The Greatest Influence Power Imbalance and Inequality	24
Creating Safe Spaces	26
Realigning our Christian Faith to Jesus Christ	28
Conclusion	30
Bibliography	31

Acknowledgements

Devotional for the 16 Days of Activism 2022

The Devotional for the 16Days of Activism was prepared for the Pacific Conference of Churches in Oceania with the ongoing support from its Member Churches.

The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) wished to thank the member churches for their support always in developing and creating resource materials that will be enriching and beneficial for God's people in the churches in the Pacific and especially those that are vulnerable due to violence they experience in their lives.

This is the first ever devotional for the 16Days of Activism to provide wholeness of life to the survivors and victims of violence and also to perpetrators to change their behaviours and mind-settings. The Pacific Conference of Churches- the Moderator Rev Dr Tevita Havea, Deputy-Moderator Deaconess Tamalesi Makutu, General Secretary Rev James Bhagwan and officers at the PCC Head Office in Suva wished to register our big gratitude to the contributions of our own Reverends and laity for these devotional for the 16Days of Activism 2022.

Our acknowledgments goes to the following contributors to the 16Days Devotional for the 16Days of Activism:

1. Rev Ikani Tolu - Free Wesleyan Church in Tonga (FWCT) Tonga
2. Rev Sulufainga Uota- Ekelesia Kalisiano Tuvalu (EKT) Tuvalu
3. Rev Noa Turanganivalu- Methodist Church in Fiji (MCIF) Fiji
4. Rev Leinamau Manrogoana- Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu (PCV) Vanuatu
5. Rev Dr Cliff Bird - United Church in the Solomon Islands (UCSI) Solomon Islands
6. Rev Berenike Biko- Kiribati Uniting Church (KUC) Kiribati
7. Rev Billy Wetewea- Protestant Church of Kanaky (EPKNC) Kanaky/ New Caledonia
8. Dr Aroha Rountree- Trinity Methodist Theological College - Aotearoa/New Zealand
9. Rev Dari Riqeo- United Church in the Solomon Islands (UCSI)- Solomon Islands
10. Mrs Anareta Apole- Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC)
11. Rev Dr Tevita Nawadra- Methodist Church in Fiji (MCIF) Fiji
12. Dr Mercy Maliko- Methodist Church in Samoa (MCS)- Samoa
13. Rev Armstrong Pitakaji- United Church in the Solomon Islands (UCSI) Solomon Islands
14. Rev Geraldine Varea- Methodist Church in Fiji (MCIF) Fiji
15. Rev Siera Bird- Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC)
16. Rev Valamotu Palu- Tonga/Australia

Vinaka Vakalevu, Malo lelei, Talofa lava, Fafeetai lava, Kam bati n raba, Tena koutou, Leana hola, Tank yu tumas and Thank you very much for your time, your word of wisdom to provide right messages to liberate our people in our churches in times like these.

Background of 16 Days of Activism

Devotional for the 16 Days of Activism 2022

16 Days is an opportunity to show collective actions and solidarity in efforts to end VAW. In 1993 the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against women defined violence against women “as any act of GBV, which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life.

In 1999, the 16 days of activism began as an initiative of the Centre for Women’s Global Leadership based in New Jersey, United States of America. Over the years the campaign has been widely supported by women’s organisation ,CSO’s, FBO’s, governments, private sector, educational institutions, communities including development agencies.

The 16 Days runs from the 25th November, UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to the 10th December, Human Rights Day. The campaign spans these 16 days in order to highlight the links between ending GBV and Human Rights values and that GBV and Human Rights Violation. Further details of the significant dates to observe within this 16days period are:

- November 25- International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- November 29- International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People
- December 1- World Aids Day
- December 2- International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- December 3- International Day of Disabled Persons
- December 6- Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre
- December 10- Human Rights Day

Introduction

Devotional for the 16 Days of Activism 2022

In the Pacific, faith or spirituality is very much part and parcel of people's daily living. Since Christianity arrived on the Pacific shores in the late 1700 to early 1900s, the societal way of living rooted in the heart of the Gospel based on God's love- on unity- God loves all people in their differences. Church coverage and system is reach-out to most people in the islands of the Pacific and the people's moral values based on their beliefs in the Christian faith and their cultures.

The Bible had been use in the Pacific communities to encourage people to live a moral living pleasing to God that will be rewarded after death. The interpretations of the scriptures "expressions of Christianity which penetrated the islands of the Pacific came with their traditional readings and interpretations of the Bible and their prevailing theological understandings did not help much with transforming unequal relationships. On the contrary, these interpretations and theologies cemented much of the existing relational practices in society. The major focus of the various missions was more on the salvation of 'heathens' rather than on preaching and practicing equality between women and men and their God-given dignity. This was not surprising because much of the Christianity (or Christianities) that was (or were) introduced into the island communities was built on and supported (knowingly or otherwise) by philosophical ideas which did not think very highly of women or of being female" (Bird, 2016).

The Bible is taken as the word of God by many of our Pacific people and the biblical text taken literally instead of interpreting it that will relevant to our different context. At times, the bible was/is use by people to claim that God speak to them which was/is not encouraging but can be oppressing to others, such as traditional theologies that violating the right of women to enjoy the fullness of life that God intended for all his children. It is our prayer that these 16 devotions will liberate and empower survivors and victims of violence and to condemn that violence is a SIN and God is not happy with all forms of violence.

Female - Male: Both Created in the Image of God

25th November, 2022



TUVALU

Rev Sulufaiga Uota

Rev Sulufaiga Uota is one of the first female ordained Minister of the Ekelesia Kalisiano Tuvalu (EKT) Church who was ordained in July 2022.

GENESIS 1: 26-28 (NRSV)

Prayer:

God who have created man and woman in your image, you have created a relationship for which man and woman to be in peaceful companionship. We have so much experience heard over TV, Radio or newspaper, news about the massive victims of violence against women. We believe God that this may go against your will, because you have created man and woman in your image. Women victims of gender based violence dignities has been valueless. Be it through cultural and traditional norms that may have contributed to the effect of gender base violence. Or maybe because of some men using substance for which they have been ignore to shed your light where appropriate for the sustenance of the peaceful relationship that should be continued to be nurtured between man and woman as the crown over your creeping creatures. Lord forgive your ignorant children and uphold their spirits so they may be beacon of your love and peace. To educate the perpetrators of gender based violence and those who are following, to be transformed and be change makers and peacemakers in society in this regards. In Jesus name we pray. AMEN.

Genesis first account of the creation story uses plural pronouns; then God said let us make human beings in our image. Gods and human beings were both in plural pronouns. The employment of plural pronouns is to indicate basis for a relationship to be nurtured between men and women as they have been created in the image of God. They are the crown of all God's creation whom they were entrusted to look after, be it creatures on the land, air and the sea. A relationship where is there is no one domineers over another, a working relationship between man and woman to be productive but not to cause violence over another. The emphasis of egalitarian in this account confirms that man and woman has purposefully created to continue in good mutual relationship and that their dignity be upheld.

Apparently, the relationship between man and woman have been problematic over the years, man has exerted authority over woman for which if the woman cannot meet the expectations of the man. Violence may be experienced within the home be in the form of assault or any other harmful attitude would be shown towards a woman/women. The Genesis account has been breached and this be seen as SIN.

Our churches should create safe spaces where the voices of the victims of abuse, victims of gender based violence share their stories. In a way churches could listen and receive real experiences of violence against women, and strategize of how women be empowered and to continue to stand their grounds of justice. In the same way, men to be educated and value women as they are blessings to the family, community and society. The church and even the Christian communities and individuals, should be responsible to respond positively in nurturing the relationship between man and woman, uphold their dignities so there is improvement to the attitudes of the gender based violence perpetrators as well as the structures and norms that may cause violence against women.

Stand In What You Believe

26th November, 2022



FII

Rev Dr Tevita Nawadra

Rev Dr Tevita Bainivanua Nawadra is former president of the Methodist Church in Fiji. He is supporting the PCC through the work with Child Protection and he is currently chairperson of the Regional Ecumenical Community (REC).

Introduction:

The book of Esther was a book that finds difficulties into the Canon of the Old Testament. An interesting book in that there is no mention of the name of God in its ten chapters, but much more interesting is the fact that it was written after the reign of King Cyrus of Persia who took over the leadership of the then known world [the Babylonian Empire]. King Cyrus of Persia [539 - 530- in his Edict to free the Jews], is claimed to be the first world leader during biblical times, to use what we now know as the concept of International Human Rights when he freed the Jews from captivity. The chosen text - chapter one, is where we will focus this short bible study. The chapter focused on the sacking of Queen Vashti, by King Ahasuerus also known as Xerxes wife [Ezra 4: 6]. The king called his kingdom together to display his wealth to his government officials which spread from India to Ethiopia in a banquet for many days [180 days].

ESTHER 1: 1 - 23

After showing the splendor of his majesty, the King again called another seven [7] days of banqueting in his royal palace in Susa. Queen Vashti also called a banquet for women in the palace of the King, it seems that only men were invited or allowed in the Kingly banquet. There were then two national banquets going on at the same time.

What can we learn from such an arrangement?

1. When heads of families are going in their different ways one should expect problem.
2. Was the queen's call for another banquet a blatant disregard of authority and protocol and disobedience? Or
3. Was the queen's decision to call another banquet a sign of the transformation that gave freedom for women's voice to be heard? This freedom came about through the first king of the Persian Empire, King Cyrus the Great, who gave the Edict that allowed the Jewish peoples freedom to return from their exile to their homeland [539-530]. In the strength of his Edict, he also gave freedom to the building of Jerusalem and especially the temple.

Stand In What You Believe

26th November, 2022

The book of Ezra, and especially Isaiah 45: where King Cyrus was called as God's anointed or in Hebrew- Messiah, and Greek as Christ. In Isaiah 45 God commissioned Cyrus [who was not a believer], to the task of delivering the Jewish exiled to their homeland. The second issue was the refusal of the Queen to appear before the King and his high officials as he demanded. It was this refusal that caused her to lose her Crown. To refuse to appear, was a slap in the face to the King and who her husband, never mind was also all the high officials of the Empire.

What can we learn from the Queen's refusal to the order from the King?

1. A strong and a courageous woman refusing to be displayed in front of drunken man.
2. A woman upholding her God given dignity
3. A woman knowing what may happen to her if she refuses to appear, yet decided to do what she believes.

Conclusion:

Queen Vashti I believe was aware of the transformation brought about by King Cyrus the Great. It may have been her wish that her husband, King Ahausuerus would follow but was not able, therefore her resistance. Cyrus was called by God in Isaiah Chap 45 as Gods Anointed or Messiah or Christ.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You that no problem we face in our life, church fellowship, local community, or nation, is too difficult for You and that You are the God of the impossible.

Thank You for the book of Esther and the many spiritual truths and life-principles we can learn from its pages. Thank You that You have a perfect plan for us and that nothing can thwart Your programme of redemption. Thank You that Your purpose for Israel can never be derailed and that the day is coming when all Israel will be saved and receive their promised inheritance, and thank You that Your purpose for the Church is being carried out and that the day is coming when we will receive our heavenly inheritance. Praise your holy name, AMEN.

A Voice Calling for Help

27th November, 2022



KIRIBATI

Rev Berenike Biko-Kiribati

Rev Berenike Biko is an ordained minister of the Kiribati Uniting Church. She is currently serving her church as a lecturer in Tangitebu Theological College teaching Theology and Ministry.

LUKE 10:38-42

Prayer:

Dear God who is our Mother and Father, we pray for all those who had been calling out for help in many ways to be heard and assisted according to their needs. We pray that we may be used as channels of your peace where violence is experienced. Amen.

Calling out for help is often regarded as the voice of women and children since they are believed to be weak. Therefore, if a man calls for help then he will be regarded as binabinaine or gay. Today's reading is often preached in favour of Mary's place since it is a respected position of a disciple. Martha's place on the other hand, shows the place of a woman as in the kitchen. Today I want to shift our attention and try to hear the voice of Martha not because she is weak but because she is oin aine or oin aomata (real woman/person and so true to her identity as a human being). Managing a household is one of the highest service of a woman and I believe that most women are proud of this task. Hospitality during Jesus' time is highly valued and therefore it brings honour to a woman if she manages her household well. Being a proud house manager, Martha calls out to Jesus in need of her sister's help. This does not mean that she cannot do the chores on her own but because she knows that both positions are important and therefore one should not miss the other while being only at one place. Imagine if the two sisters sit at Jesus' feet listening only to the good news without preparing something for their visitor?

This portrays an incomplete hospitality. Both positions are complementation to one another of a true and a more holistic hospitality. Therefore, in order to achieve such a holistic hospitality, Mary and Martha need to work together in order.

Looking at Jesus' rebuking words to Martha (vs 41) does not mean that Jesus uplifted Mary and sees Martha's service of hospitality as less important. No!!! Jesus' response concerns more to the Patriarchal system whereas women are seen as inferior and so their place is only at the kitchen. Here, Jesus affirms the status of a woman as his disciple. A place seen in the Jewish context as reserved only for men. Jesus encourages Martha to see beyond her boundary and exercise her freedom of choice and not limited by cultural preferences. This is a call to all people - men and women; whether white or black, young or old to see our responsibilities and fulfil them according to God's will. We are challenged to hear the voice of others who are in need of help not because they are weak only but because they are human beings made also in the image of God. In this 16 Days of Activism, we are called to be active to end violence and be hospitable to all voices who needs comfort at all times.

A View into an Example of Christ-Culture Encounter

28th November, 2022



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Rev Dr Cliff Bird

Rev Dr Cliff Bird was a former lecturer at the Pacific Theological College. He was the author of the Gender Equality Theology resource materials that use for UnitingWorld partners in the Pacific. He is currently an advisor for his church- UCSI.

EPHESIANS 5:21-33

When it comes to the lowly perceptions and generally negative treatment of women and girls across Oceania, a common default position is culture. This default position was the same in the Greco-Roman world before, during and even after the time of Jesus and the Apostles. At first glance the text reveals that the cultural wifely one-way submission to her husband was the order of the day.

However, a careful rereading would suggest that the text is subtly intended by Paul to subvert this patriarchal structure and the socialisation of women and men in the culturally defined wife-husband relationship. Paul does this by bringing the countercultural dynamics of Christ and his relationship with the Church into the discussion. How?

Firstly, Paul clearly states that both wife and husband are meant to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (v.21) because they are both part and members of the Church, the Body of Christ. Secondly, he exhorts the wife to submit to her husband "as if to the Lord" (v.22), which means that a wife's submission to her husband is neither unconditional nor at all cost.

Earlier Paul exhorts the Ephesians to imitate God and to practice God's love as demonstrated in Christ (v.1-2). Thus the wife's submission to her husband is, therefore, conditioned upon these qualitative standards and in the ways in which the husband is expected to love his wife. Thirdly, Paul in carefully words and arguments exhorted husbands to love their wives, however, not in the patriarchal-cultural ways but in the new ways as God's new community thanks to the work of God through Jesus Christ (see chapters 1 & 2). He then establishes three pillars upon which this love of a husband for his wife must be practiced or lived out. One: the self-giving life of Christ (v.25).

A View into an Example of Christ-Culture Encounter

28th November, 2022

Husbands are to love their wives selflessly and sacrificially. This means being humble enough to discover and embrace that which is in the best interest and welfare of their wives and to willingly submit to their wives because of the love demonstrated by Christ. Two: the servant-hood of Christ (v.26-27).

Christ is head of the church but Christ is also portrayed in the role of the servant. Here Christ's headship is exercised through servant-hood. (See also John 13 where Jesus as Master and Teacher takes on the servant's role). Husbands are instructed to assume the lowliest of all tasks to serve their wives. Three: the respectful and loving treatment by husbands of their own bodies (28 - 31).

Paul argues that just as a husband does not hate his own body, so also must he love and cherish his wife in the same way he loves and cares for his own body. What does all of this mean? Perpetrations and justifications of violence against women and girls, or treating them as inferior because of gender and cultural perceptions, and using texts such as this one, are against God's vision for all human relationships. The 16 Days of Activism calls for repentance from Violence Against Women and for resolve to do our part to end such violence.

Prayer:

Loving God, we lift all victims and survivors of violence and abuse to you. We ask you to give them your love and protection. Grant us your courage and determination, so we can speak up against the violence inflicted upon your precious people, and to act accordingly. Help us to see situations where violence is taking place and give us wisdom and strength to know how to act.

AMEN.

The Future Begins in the Family

29th November, 2022



VANUATU

Rev Leinamau
Manrongoana-

Rev Leinamau Manrongoana is one of the first female ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu. She is currently at the Pacific Theological College, doing her PhD.

PROVERBS 13:1, 24 AND 14: 3

The book of Proverbs introduces itself as: The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel (1:1). What is a proverbs? In Pasifika, a proverb is understood to be 'a short wise saying' that explains something - 'when a tree is young, one can straighten it, but when it is old, it cannot be straightened.' However, one can also find comparisons to other biblical books, warnings, normal daily life issues, with advice and encouragement for our life today.

Proverbs 13:1, reminds us again of parental guidance through instruction, which we see a pattern of it in some parts of proverbs. The familiar theme is verbal communication. The wise child loves discipline, but the scoffer or the mocker, does not listen or accept rebuke or correction. We all have experience this type of advice or warning from our parents or elders when growing up. When parents communicate well with their children while young, their fresh and soft minds and

hearts can be easily corrected and they learn to say 'sorry' or 'thank you' or 'please' which show character and the attitude of willing to forgive and be forgiven. But it also relates to problems that need to be sorted out now, and not later, for time flies and many times, we leave them for so long, it becomes harder to solve.

For this verse is not only for the child to admit its mistakes - it also applies to the father, mother, siblings and other family members. It is all about being honest, humble and admitting one's mistakes or owning up to what was done wrongly and be willing and humble to correct it. With today's technology in life, it is becoming very hard for verbal communication to be heard and obeyed.

The Future Begins in the Family

29th November, 2022

A father could almost text a mother to bring him a glass of water, even though they are sitting at the same table looking at their phones. And that does greater damage to their children who follow suit – Proverbs 22:6 says ‘Train up a child in the way he/she should go and when they are old, they cannot depart from it.’

Verse 24, is part of the wisdom sayings – ‘Those who love their children, discipline them.’ Many times the word discipline is often thought of as a ‘rod’ or ‘stick’ or ‘broom’ or something hard that can give pain to the child to make them listen and obey, but again, words were given with a voice to talk gently but firmly with little ones to start teaching them with love, patience, gentleness, kindness and care. The use of ‘sticks’ or other objects have often turned into abuse. Since schools have been banned from using corporal punishment – the question is, how do the children learn to listen and obey? What can we creatively teach and guide them as parents to help them to listen and obey?

In Proverbs 14:1, opens with a contrast between the wise woman and the foolish one. The former builds her house – like the wise woman in Proverbs 31 – but the latter tears hers down... with her own hands. We are again reminded of the words in Proverbs 9:1 ‘Wisdom has built her house.’ Or when we think of Matthew 24 of the wise man build his house upon the rock ... and the rain came tumbling down ... but the house on the rock stood fast! It all comes back to the home and how we teach and train our little ones with our natural creative ways (5 senses and common sense) that God has blessed us with, as parents and teachers and carers to safeguard our children and communicate well with them, training the next generation of future godly fathers and mothers for Pasifika.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father and Mother of Wisdom, Thank you for allowing us the ability to think, see, hear, talk, smell, feel and use our common sense, to be able to live life to its fullness. Help us build our lives with your wisdom according to your plan and purpose. Bless our homes and give us the courage and creativity to discipline in the right way when the need arises. Bless us to be humble and repentant when we do wrong. Help us to be filled with humility and love in order to reconcile and stay close to you always.

AMEN.

Liberation and Redemption

30th November, 2022



TONGA

Rev Ikani Tolu

Rev Ikani Tolu is an ordained minister of the Free Wesleyan Church in Tonga. He used to work at PCC and he is currently the General Secretary of Tonga National Council of Churches.

JOHN 8:1-11

When we look closer at the story, Jesus attempts at bringing women to a higher, if not equal status with men. He does this through bringing to light the fact that all people are equal in the eyes of God, for all are guilty with sin, and are capable of receiving redemption. He not only protects and saves the woman from physical damage and death. He grants her inner redemption and cleansing of her soul and heart. He called her to new life, "Go and sin no more." Adultery takes two people, and according to the Law of Moses, both are to be condemned but we hear no mention of the man, who was also to be judged. The Pharisees and Scribes claimed that they found this woman having sexual intercourse with a man, as they say that she was caught committing adultery.

But at the same time, no one bothers to ask about the man with whom she committed adultery with. Since the men were simply trying to catch Jesus is a trap, they could have brought both

the man and the woman, or even just the man before Jesus. However, they did not; they only brought him the poor woman.

The reason for bringing only the woman could possibly be because they were men, and wanted to "protect" other men at the expense of women. Women were often neglected and put below men during this time and for generations before, as the man was head of the household. This relates back to Genesis and the Fall, as the people sought to blame Eve for the sin. It also connects to Genesis through the Creation of Eve, second to Adam, as many came to see it. They use this as an excuse to make men have greater hierarchical power in society, leadership, and in the household. Since the Mosaic Law insisted both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death' (Leviticus 20:10), how come they weren't both hauled into the Temple?

Many forget the man when looking at the passage. The focus is centralized on the woman, and Jesus.

Liberation and Redemption

30th November, 2022

The Law which the leaders refer to is: "If a man be found laying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman, so shalt thou put away evil from Israel." If adultery always accused and condemns two, then the decision for the leaders to bring only the woman is not fair and unjust, and discriminates against women, as they were all men. The law has been somehow manipulated to accommodate their aim and wish.

In looking at the Mosaic Laws, for the case of adultery, the sin committed was by a man. In all cases, adultery was committed by a man. However, since woman was considered essentially a possession of her husband, the adulterer was considered to be a criminal against the husband and not a violation of the woman's human rights. The woman has no say in her judgment, as she is a possession of the man. I believe Jesus not only attempts to make people recognize their sins through this story, but also to make this woman, and all women more than possessions to be governed by men.

The reactions of the people gathered to observe this scene reflects the inner changes in the hearts of the people. Jesus is not only making an impact on the woman and the leaders, but on all people. He does not change this Law, but merely brings in his own interpretation on how people should be judged, as all are sinners. We need to see the destructive power of sin before we appreciate the gift of grace and forgiveness. Jesus faced the sin head on rather than trying to redefine it. He set her free from condemnation and encouraged her on a new direction. It is an act of liberating the poor woman from sin yet assuring redemption for her. Calling sin virtue is like painting the walls of the prison. It doesn't change the fact that you are still in prison. The goal of God's forgiveness is not for us to be able to sin without feeling bad, it is so we can pursue holiness and godliness. We are freed so we can move in a new and different direction.

Adultery as sin is clearly spelled out by the law. The Scribes and Pharisees brought the woman and condemned her as being caught on the act. The law also alludes that such sin will be stoned to death. It encourages acts of violence against the woman, so the law encourages violence against her. Now comes the issue of whether violence is a sin or not. What does the bible say? "There is a time to love and a time to hate" (Ecclesiastes 3:8). We are told there is a time for peace (non-violence) and a time for war (violence) however the issue comes when we try to determine when is the time for peace and when is the time for violence. This is why Jesus the Messiah, who came later and realized this issue in the Torah came with the message declaring people to simply not be violent at all. He knew that people were using the Old Testament in order to justify doing acts of violence against others, and that they would say it was in God's name thus declared, "But I tell you do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you in the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." (Matt. 5:39).

Liberation and Redemption

30th November, 2022

So I will conclude by saying yes violence is a sin. However, depending on the context, it can sometimes be the lesser evil in a situation. There is a time for peace and a time for war. Unless you can be 100% sure that in using violence against another group of people or a person, you will be seen as just by God, do not use violence at all. Otherwise, you risk hell unless of course you ask for forgiveness sincerely in the name of Jesus. Peace is what the bible teaches, Jesus despised violence and thus anyone who is Christian should despise violence just as much as he did. We are not the Israelites of the Prophet Moses or Joshua's time, we are not commanded by God to do acts of violence against others hence violence is a sin.

I'll end on these verses:

Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways (Proverbs 3:31) Do not plan evil against your neighbor, who dwells trustingly beside you. (Proverbs 3:29) Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Romans 12:19) They once asked Jesus, what is the law (as in the Old Testament). He responded: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the Prophets. (Matt 7:12)

Prayer:

Guide us Lord to do the right things according to the teaching of Jesus. Let us be a vessel of peace and condemn evil of violence. May the power of your healing reconcile our hearts with God, and that united to your heart. You called us out of silence to speak out for peace, love, and mercy. We pray for all women who despite suffering from violence continue to care for family and children. We pray that women's voices may be heard for reconciliation and peace. We pray for right and just relations between women and men that others may transform and overcome violence and to learn to celebrate our diversity and independence. May we live the promise of the victorious return of Christ, our Lord.

AMEN.

What do men know about the hemorrhaging of a woman?

1st December, 2022



AOTEAROA

Dr Aroha Rountree

Dr Aroha Rountree is currently a Senior Lecturer in Māori/Moana Studies at Trinity Methodist Theological College in Auckland, Aotearoa /New Zealand.

In the prior text, Jesus had freed a demon-possessed man, and in this text the hemorrhaging woman is freed of her ailments by touching Jesus' clothing and in the next passage the dead daughter of Jairus is freed from death by Jesus. Each miracle is predicated on the faith of people in desperation and despondency who sought/seek out Jesus the healer, and the liberator.

The text of Mark 5: 24-34, suggests a stealthy and surreptitious approach to Jesus by the unknown/unnamed woman, referred to only by her condition of hemorrhaging. As she approaches Jesus from behind, she grasps at his garment and simultaneously receives the gift of healing. The most common interpretation of the narrative highlights the woman's impurity, in contrast to the healing touch of Jesus.

MARK 5: 22-24

While the distinction of the impurity of the hemorrhaging woman may well be aligned with the Jewish (Levitical) law as is discussed by Susan Haber in her article *A Woman's Touch: Feminist Encounters with the Hemorrhaging Woman in Mark 5:24-34*, it is deeply contradictory to tikanga Māori (Māori customs).

In a Māori context, when we think and talk about the hemorrhaging woman we are reminded of the traditions of the past and the fundamental preservation of whakapapa me te tapu o te whare tangata. 2 We as tangata whenua (people of the land), think and speak of lineage and the womb that is set apart as significantly important and protected by Atua Māori (Māori deity). There is no suggestion of impurity or uncleanness of the hemorrhaging of blood. According to Ngāhuia Murphy the opposite is true, "A study of ancient menstrual rites, recorded in tribal songs and chants, reveal that menstrual blood was used for psychic and spiritual protection. These examples unveil striking Indigenous constructs of womanhood that transform colonialist interpretations and radically challenge notions of female inferiority and menstrual pollution." 3 The importance of the wāhine (women) as the whare tangata (house of humanity) was demonstrated in the elaborate celebration of menstruation as a life-affirming process, with the exchange of gifts and feasting.

2 Whakapapa refers to genealogy or lineage. Te tapu o te whare tangata is in reference to the sacredness of the womb.
3 Murphy, Ngāhuia., *Te Awa Atua, Te Awa Tapu, Te Awa Wāhine: An examination of stories, ceremonies, and practices regarding menstruation in the pre-colonial Māori world*, 2011.

Te Awa Tapu: He tapu o te wāhine!

What do men know about the hemorrhaging of a woman?

1st December, 2022

What did Jesus know of the hemorrhaging woman?

Jesus knew only that amongst the crowd, the hemorrhaging woman revealed herself as having been the recipient of healing. Jesus (were he male) would likely have been oblivious to the long-suffering woman and the relief that good health and healing had brought to her. Jesus knew only that her faith had brought her before him and in response he sent her out in peace. Jesus the healer provided immediate relief of pain and suffering. Jesus the liberator provided a pathway to freedom by not rebuking the woman who had perhaps taken liberties.

He Inoi

E te Atua o te rama me te ora
Ko Ihu Karaiti tōu mātou Kaiwhakaora
Kia tau tōu manaakitanga ki runga ki a tātou
E te Atua tōu mātou whaea me tōu mātou matua
Ko Ihu Karaiti tōu mātou Kaiwhakaora
Kia whakatōngia mai ōu kaha ki a tātou
E te Atua kaha rawa ora tonu
Ko Ihu Karaiti tōu mātou Kaiwhakaora
Kia arahina mai ōu māramatanga ki a tātou
E te Atua o te tika me te pono
Ko Ihu Karaiti tōu mātou Kaiwhakaora
Kia tau tōu rangimarie ki a tātou
Ake tonu atu,

Amine

A Prayer

God of light and life
Jesus Christ our healer
May your blessings be upon us
God our mother and our father
Jesus Christ our liberator
May your strength be instilled in us
God almighty ever-living
Jesus Christ our healer
May your wisdoms be our guide
God of justice and truth
Jesus Christ our liberator
May your peace be upon us
Forever,

Amen

Greetings to the Beloved One! Greetings to the One who Enlightens and Uplifts! Greetings to Humanity!

2nd December, 2022



KANAKY

Rev Billy Wetewea &
Mama Kuiesine Elia
(Hnathigöma-Bethania)-

Rev Billy Wetewea is currently assisting his church-EPKNC with the youth programme and always there to translate any communications or informations from English to French. His brother Mama Kuiesine Elia is serving at Hnathigöma-Bethania

LUKE 1:26-38

Prayer:

God who hopes on Humanity, we humbly ask your forgiveness for the wrongdoings, sufferings and destruction of humans upon themselves and your Creation. We kneel down before you, with humility and respect, with ashes on our head, for the cruelty that we, as creatures, have been capable of. Towards Justice continue to lead us! Towards our new humanity in Christ, continue to make us born again. And in Compassion with Mary we say to you: "we are the servants of the Lord; Let it be to us according to your Word."

AMEN!

In the Gospel of Luke, women take an important place. The text on the Annunciation to Mary by the Angel Gabriel is one of the significant in which Humanity will be blessed through a young virgin girl. One of the ways to contribute to the 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women and Girls is to propose a Kanak and Pasifika vision and interpretation of the text. The greetings between Gabriel and Marie has taken place the sixth month which correspond, within the Kanak Calendar, to the month of Sawaan, meaning "The Answer from the Roots, the Spirit who feeds". Therefore, based on the narrative, we would like to highlight a new process of reflexion and analysis towards Humanity, in five steps: "Because of the Compassion of God for Humanity, His choice was directed to Mary to whom God give her his Grace (1. Ihnimigufa). She will be cover by the Holy Spirit (2. Hetr), which lead her to pregnancy (3. Upune). From that will birth (4. Hnaho) the Son of God (5. Hupuna).

Firstly, Ihnimigufa is the compassionate and indebted love of God given to humanity through the Beloved One, and secondly, Hetr, meaning "The plural thinking, the gaze of the Spirit", will express itself through the compassion, the contribution and the plural way of thinking of Humanity to eradicate injustice. Third, the Pregnancy, Upune, meaning the Spirit who dreams and prophesies, is a step where all ways of thinking and understanding need to mature, grow, and take form, in order to be seen, accepted, understood, and taken care of by whole society and humanity. Fourth, through these 16 Days of Activism, we will need to understand that humanly and spiritually, we have to let us be guided by the Spirit and by Compassion. Thus, Hnaho, this soul who will be announced, propagated, and thrown into life, will be this new kind of Humanity. Fifth, leave the pregnancy take form! Leave the birth come, like in a normal pregnancy cycle, so that in the next Sawaan, we can have the meaning and the answer of the Son of God, Hupuna, a set of visions and prophesies of God, of knowledge, of instruction... In Him will be found this new ideal, this new Humanity.

Living Hope

3rd December, 2022



TONGA

Rev Valamotu Palu

Prayers: Rev Siera Bird-
Solomon Islands

Rev Valamotu Palu was a former General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC). She is currently serving at her Tongan community in Australia.

Prayer:

God our mother and father, who created female and male in your image and entrusted us with responsibilities to care for your creation and care for each other, yet, we cause a lot of violence and destruction to each other and to your creation. We pray for many women in our societies, who are still far-off the mark in reaching equal leadership and equal participation in decision-making. We remember and mention our young and underage girls who were and are forced into prostitution and sex tourism, raped and sexually abused. We also think of the many women who are still expected to stay home and carry out household work – work that is so crucial to family welfare, and yet is so often unacknowledged and unappreciated. Triune God, we cry out to you for justice. In Jesus Name we Pray. AMEN

ROMANS 8:21-22

Our human history is littered with wars and disputes, natural and human-made disasters, violence and crimes. When we are out of strength and especially out of faith, we start asking the “Why” questions. Why do we suffer? Why God allows us to go through pain and struggles? Why me? Why us? Why now?

In v. 18, Paul begins with this affirmation, “I consider that what we suffer at this present time cannot be compared at all with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.” He continued to affirm that regardless of the pain, all of God’s creation are eagerly waiting and longing for the revelation of God and that was the hope, the living hope.

How does this message lift the spirits of people in the smaller island nations of the Pacific who love their islands and struggle with climate change issues, while watching these islands slowly washed away by the sea? How does it help women who silently suffer violence every day? Families separated, starved and in refugee camps because of wars? The Indigenous People who mourn the destruction of their rainforest, lands and their identities? The young people on the streets who feel that home is no longer safe for them? People who think they have everything but have no peace of minds and hearts? People who have lost faith in themselves and in the Living God?

We are all responsible to help and to reach out to each other in so many different ways. If you wish to make this world a better place, shine your light so that we can see each other’s eyes and say to each other, “God is with us always. God is the Living God and we should have a living Hope.

Abuse of Power Abuse Against Women

4th December, 2022



FIJI

Mrs Anareta Apole

Mrs Anareta Apole was working for many years at Fiji government, particularly with Ministry of Women. She is currently working at the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) with the 'Just & Safe Pacific Communities for Women & Men (J&SPCW&M) since February 2022.

II SAMUEL 11: 1-27

Prayer:

Dear God, you're not seen, but you're present and felt. You see our dark sides, you hear pains and sufferings. Grant us courage and the wisdom to stand up for those who are down and lend a voice to those who cannot speak and are deliberate being silenced. Assure us, all the time when do justice, You have a place for us when our days here are finished, a place where the streets are made of gold and we enjoy forever with You. This is our prayer offered in Your name.

AMEN!

One evening, King David got up from his bed and walked around the roof of his palace. From where he stood, he saw a lady bathing. She noticed her beauty and send someone to find out who she was. The person who was send to find out came and said "she was Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. King David send a messenger to get her. She came to him and slept with her and was sent back to her home. The woman later conceived and Bathseba sent the word to King David that she was pregnant. On I Samuel 13:14, King David had been referred to as "a man after God's own heart and regardless of that, he allowed his position of power and rulership to do what she did to Bathseba. He was idle, because all his army including Bathsheba's husband Uriah were on the battlefield. This innocent attractive women at her home and surrounding was not even safe. When Kind David knew that Bathseba had conceived, he tried to prevent disgrace/shame for him when he called Uriah for a planned dinner to cover up the pregnancy and it failed. (II Samuel 11: 6-11). King David finally got Uriah killed in the battle (II Samuel 11: 12-17).

As we reflect on the story between King David and Bathseba, is often describes as adultery, implying mutual consent and power balance between both parties. However, King David possibly had more power as sovereign over Israel's largest territory. This story of sexual violation is serious and even David confesses his wrongdoings, and forgiveness, restoration followed. God does forgive our sins when we confess our wrongdoings and seek forgiveness. For our learning and reflection, there can be no reversing on the devastating effects on what King David did to Bathseba an how he used his power over her. This story happened a long time ago, but the issue remains as timely as ever and important as this validate the stories of other victims of abuse in our society. Just as God saw what King David did to Bathseba, so God sees what perpetrators do to victims of abuse today.

CRITICIZED BY THE WORLD AND YET HIGHLY COMMENDED AND HONORED BY JESUS

5th December, 2022



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Rev Armstrong Pitakaji

Rev Armstrong Pitakaji is the current moderator of the United Church in the Solomon (UCSI) Islands and he is the Chairperson of Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) Executive Board.

JOHN 12: 1-11

Prayer:

Lord we acknowledge that we have failed you for not act justly to serve you and your people whom you have entrusted to our care. We ask for your forgiveness. Renew our spirit so that we may be able to discern your will thereby act in faith to serve you, your church and your people. Grant us a willing spirit to act and serve justly for the common good of the whole of humanity. Help us to discern and recognize where there is need to address and attend to for the good of your people and for your own glory. Give us a willing spirit to serve you and your people. In Jesus' name we pray.

AMEN!

This is a well-known story about the Woman who anointed Jesus' feet with a very expensive perfume. This same story can also be found in the other two synoptic Gospels. The Gospel according to Matthew (26:6-13) and the Gospel according to Mark (14:3-9). In John's account, it was Judas Iscariot who criticizes the woman's act of anoint Jesus' feet. He argues that this perfume costs a year's wages, it should have been sold and the money given to the poor. In Matthew's account (26:9) it was the disciples who were indignant and declared that this woman's act is a total waste. They said, "What a waste?" it should have been sold and the money given to the poor. In Mark's account, it was some who were present at the table who were indignant and asked, "Why waste such expensive perfume?" While this woman receives negative comments and harsh criticisms from Jesus' very own followers, in this case the disciples and people who associated with Jesus, her strange act of faith in honoring Jesus by anointing the Masters feet with this very expensive perfume was highly appreciated and honored by Jesus. John 12:7, Jesus gave stern rebuke to Judas Iscariot, "Leave her alone! She did this very act in preparation for my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me. In Mark's account chapter 14:9, Jesus declared to his followers and said, "I tell you the truth, wherever the Good news is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be remembered and discussed. Jesus' followers (Disciples) used the name of the poor as their reason to condemn or harshly criticize this woman's act of faith in anointing our Lord's feet. But their real motive lies behind their desire and lust for money. Lesson learnt: Our little act or duty of faith rendered to our Lord for the general good of humanity maybe harshly criticized by the world but yet highly commended and honored by Jesus who calls us to serve God and the world. The world and those who oppose us may Criticize, harshly condemn or discredit our act of faith and just responsibility we have rendered for the good of all, but yet when we do it justly, with genuine heart and right spirit, we will leave a legacy behind us for the next generation.

The Power of Vulnerability

6th December, 2022



FIJI

Rev Geraldine Varea

Rev Geraldine Varea is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church in Fiji. She was a lecturer at Davuilevu Theological College and currently she is at the Pacific Theological College doing her PhD.

GENESIS 16:1-16

Prayer:

Lord, we thank thee for your love that continues to remind us that women are equal with men. Give us courage to realize our faults and the lack of our inhumane actions. Help us to recognize each other as equals in God's creation. May our families, churches and communities realize the value of women and put a stop to violence. May we continue to say No to violence against women for the sake of our children. In Jesus' name

AMEN!

We live in a world where women are often judged according to culture and patriarchal perspective that places women on the periphery of society. This makes women vulnerable either physically or emotionally. Genesis 16:1-16 is an example of a vulnerable woman named Hagar. She had no voice, a woman-servant and an object for another's command. But when she and her were banished, and had to step out of her comfort zone, and journeyed into the wilderness, it symbolized the recognition of herself as a human rather than a property. Women are human beings created equally with man in God's image. She is not inferior nor superior to any human being. In other words, to end violence against women, families, churches and communities must understand and know that women are equal with men rather than a property of service.

As Hagar and her son moves into the wilderness, she is exposed to the danger of being devoured by wild animals. She is exposed to starvation. However, in her state of vulnerability, Hagar encountered God in the wilderness. She named God El Roi, the God who sees. Being vulnerable maybe seen as a weakness but it is a strength. It is the birthplace of joy, creativity, belonging and love. Hagar's story reminded us that being courageous does not mean walking alone but rather walking with God. The wilderness presents a new perspective of seeing God's covenant not only descending from a male but also from a woman, Hagar. Through Hagar, Ishmael found his place as a freed, courageous child who grew through the arms of his mother. Real relationships mean creating and leaving space for another. Spouses should not seek to control one another. It is the carefully calibrated distance between us in which relationship allows each party to grow. Therefore, Hagar's story in the wilderness is the story about the birth of the individual. There must be separation for such momentous change to happen. But it is also the story about God teaching us the delicate art of making space, without which no true individuality can grow.

Faith Breaks Silence and Restores Hope in Christ

7th December, 2022



SAMOA

Dr Mercy Maliko

Dr Mercy Maliko Mercy was a former lecturer at Piula Theological College and National University of Samoa. She is now serving with her husband in the Samoan Methodist Church in Palmerston North, New Zealand, and as a Research Affiliate for Otago University.

MATTHEW 15: 21-28

Prayer:

God of grace and mercy. The God to whom all hearts are opened, and thoughts revealed. We surrender to you all victims and survivors of all forms of violence. We remember the innocent children who are either victims or witness to such cruelties. May you protect them and restore trust and love within their hearts. Transform all of us through your Holy Spirit. And may we continue to love one another as you have loved us.

AMEN!

Women are more concerned with issues of relationship and care. They see themselves as being linked to others. As wives, women are identified in reference to their husbands. As mothers, women prioritise the wellbeing of their children. In the text, the story opens with Jesus' arrival in the region of Tyre and Sidon (Matt.15:21), and the appearance of a Canaanite person, a woman. She is not only an outsider in reference to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, but she is also a woman. She appears with her request to Jesus, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon" (Matt.15:22). Her desperate plea embodies her caring and genuine love for her daughter. She expected a favourable response from Jesus due to the seriousness of her daughter's condition. While Jesus' was silent, the disciples were irritated and embarrassed with the woman's presence and persistent plea. Arguably, it is against Jewish customs for a woman to be speaking to a man in public. Jesus' response touches on the reality of the Jews. "...I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24), and "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs" (15:26). The Jews are lost in spirit, while the Canaanite woman knows the Christ in spirit and in faith. The Canaanite woman was not discouraged nor doubted Jesus' healing for her demon possessed daughter. Instead, she raised the conversation to a more profound level. She approached Jesus directly. She 'falls at his feet'. She humbles herself to restore hope in Christ's healing. As a result of the Canaanite woman's perseverance in faith, she breaks through the silence of patriarchy.

She was silent no more but continued to speak up and shared her heart with Jesus, although at times there seems to be no

way or her and her daughter. Faith is rooted in Christ. Having faith in Christ empowered the Canaanite woman to break through the silence and restores hope for healing. In a world torn by violence and all forms of cruelties, the 16 Days of Activism Campaign is an act of Faith that should embody the values of Christ. It enables both victims and survivors of all forms of violence to be healed and be transformed, As Jesus said to the woman, "...Let it be done for you as you wish" (15:28).

The Greatest Influence Power Imbalance and Inequality

8th December, 2022



FIJI

Rev Noa Turanganivalu

Rev Noa Turanganivalu is a ordained minister of the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotumas. He is currently working as a Gender Equality Theology (GET) Theologian for the Methodist Church in Fiji.

MARK 9: 33-50

The concept of 'Who is the greatest' is arguably a major influence to power imbalance and inequality in every sphere of life in the world today, whether in church, society or state. Growing up in a remote rural community, as the eldest and only boy of four siblings, 'to be the greatest' is something that was culturally embedded in me and there was high expectation from me to perform that way because of who I am – as the eldest and male figure for the four of us.

During my school years at a boys' government boarding secondary school, 'to be the greatest' is again embedded within the school culture and evidentially proofed as a major contributing factor towards bullying, and ill treatment of junior boys from the senior boys. As a husband and father, 'to be the greatest' is something that is culturally and traditionally embedded since Fiji is a patriarchal society where women, girls and children are always seen inferior to men.

In our given reading this morning, the disciples were having a dispute on this same issue as they were arguing about 'who is the greatest'. We learned from the disciples and from my personal experience (cultural and traditional) retold above that we can too often fall into petty squabbles about which of us is greater than the other.

But Jesus shows a better and totally different way which is counter cultural and counter traditional in saying that the greatest among you, he who wants to be first, is to be "servant of all." This demands a transformed heart and mindset as the the wisdom of Jesus' answer shows that true greatness lies in serving, caring, protecting, and respecting others which shifts from the traditional and cultural norm of a much self-centered approach in putting self-first before others which is inseparable from Marks's gospel theme in Mark 10:45 – For even the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The Greatest Influence Power Imbalance and Inequality

8th December, 2022

In being the servant of all, women, girls and children in the Pacific needs to be empowered, protected and given space and voice and not to be violated and abused. Violence and sin are both a sin and a crime. God is love, but God hate sin. Jesus gives this awful warning in the last part of our reading today - If anyone causes one of these "little ones," the child still in Jesus' arms as an illustration of his meaning, to sin, it would be better if he experienced a gruesome death himself.

To eliminate violence against women, girls and children and to provide protection and care to the little, we (especially men) must prevent their hands, feet, and eyes from evil. The Greatest Commandment of loving God and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves can only be fulfilled if we prevent evil and harm to others. Hell is real, and while we are, of course, not literally to cut off our hand, cut off our feet, plucked out our eyes, we are to cut out of our lives legitimate goods if they causing us (or others) to sin. As salt of world, we are to be "salty," vibrant and vigorous in our commitments to God, but we are to have "salt in ourselves and be at peace with one another."

Prayer:

Almighty God, help us today in with our desire to eliminate violence in our midst. We know that you are a loving God and within that love there is no violence. Let us today be your instrument of love and peace to others and may we imitate Christ by having the same mindset in humility by serving and putting others first before ourselves.

AMEN!

Creating Safe Spaces

9th December, 2022



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Rev Siera Bird

Rev Siera Bird is currently working with the Pacific Conference of Churches as an Ecumenical Animator for 'Just & Safe Pacific Communities for Women and Men'

2 SAMUEL 13:1-21

Statistics show that most rape cases happen in the family. The perpetrator most times is a family relative, friend or someone who knows the victim well.

The above text narrates what happened in a family home. Yet at the same time, the story holds true to what happens with many rape and incest cases that many women, girls and children experience in our societies. The rape of Tamar was premeditated and planned by her half-brother Amnon (the perpetrator) with the cunning advice of Jonadab, a cousin to both Amnon and Tamar.

The evil scheme was successful because the king, who was also their father, gave permission for Tamar to cook for her brother and to serve him in his chamber. Being king and father, David was the one person who could have protected his daughter from being raped.

Amnon already saw in his mind what would happen. In the story, Amnon's lustful and sick mind drove him and their cousin Shedab to deceive their father and uncle in order to allow their sister to get close to him. Like all fathers in that world would do, out of concern for his son's health and survival, David granted Amnon's request and allowed Tamar to prepare food and serve her brother at his chamber. Watching her sister moved and worked elevated his sexual hunger. Even when their father and king found out that Amnon raped his sister, he did nothing to punish Amnon because David still loved him.

No doubt, Tamar obeyed her father because that was what was expected during those times from girls and women. The text tells us that Tamar reasoned with her brother and highlighted the societal perceptions and the likely consequences, for them both but especially for her. Yet Amnon did not listen to her and raped her. She protested and did what she believed was right to condemn the evil act that was done to her. Yet, she was silenced by her brother Absalom.

Creating Safe Spaces

9th December, 2022

I want to say that the story sounds familiar and resonates with many rape and incest stories that many of us know or deal with. So we ask ourselves: How can we encourage and empower women like Tamar in our families, communities and churches to protest against the evil of rape and incest, and evil-doers? How can we encourage and empower women like Tamar to speak out and stand for gender justice?

Let us work to change the mind-sets of people, especially men and boys, to be more respectful and caring toward others. Let us work to change people's attitude and behaviours to be more loving and kind toward others. Family is supposed to be the safest place for women and girls. It is the first place and space where they should feel secured and protected, and live to enjoy life in all its fullness that Christ Jesus offers to all (John 10:10). It is our prayer that God touches our lives, heal our world and helps all our families to live in safety and protection.

Prayer:

Almighty Creator, grant us the strength to stand up against all forms of violence that were and are happening to women and girls; the sharpness to recognize a silenced victim of Violence Against Women and Girls; the courage to speak up against Violence Against Women and Girls; the resourcefulness to help a victim of Violence Against Women and Girls; and the resolve to never commit any form of violence against any women or girl. Help men and women to look at each other equally. Help men and women to respect each other. Help all people to love and care for each other. We pray for our churches and homes to be safe so that all members within enjoy the fullness of life. We ask for your guidance and wisdom. In Jesus Name, we pray

AMEN!

Realigning our Christian Faith to Jesus Christ

10th December, 2022



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Rev Dari Pitu Riqeo

Rev Dari Pitu Riqeo is an ordained minister of the United Church in the Solomon Islands (UCSI) and he is currently looking after the chaplain of one of the Church Secondary School

Introduction:

In as much as the intriguing factor of the fast changing world is shaping ways of thinking behaviours in the Oceania context, the Christian precepts are being challenged, hence the impacts therein instigates to reorient new paradigms that forced people to be enslaved by the illusions and competing factors like ethnicity, gender, economic, biological, moral and religious principles. On the outset, it should be a driving purpose for each individual Christians to depart from their ego centric pursuits and be mindful of the risks involved but to realign their faith to Christ and engage to realize their Christian purposes and venture into a faith relationship with Christ who is our true Saviour.

GALATIANS 3:15-29

The most pressing controversy in the early Church was the relationship of new believers, particularly Gentiles, to the Jewish laws.

This was especially a problem for the converts and for the young Churches that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey. Paul refutes the Judaisers, who taught that Gentile believers must obey the Jewish law in order to be saved and to call Christians to faith and freedom in Christ.

Summary:

The Jewish religious context is very hostile to women, children, hired slaves and gentiles respectively. Paul therefore articulates the basis of the law in three aspects to justify should they be relevant to observe or not. First, the ceremonial law which is solely for Israel's worship not applicable anymore in today's context after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Jewish Christians often accused the Gentile Christians of violating the ceremonial law.

Realigning our Christian Faith to Jesus Christ

10th December, 2022

Second, the civil law which is exceptionally dedicated to Israel's daily living. At times, Paul asked Gentile Christians to follow some of these laws, not because they have to, but in order to promote unity. This was done to merely harmonize things. Third, the moral law which is the direct command of God. For example the Ten Commandments of God. It requires strict obedience. It reveals the nature and will of God and it still applies to us today. Paul advises that such observance may not lead to our salvation but to introduce us to the new covenant Jesus Christ in whom justification or salvation is found, not by law but by faith.

Moral:

Christianity should be a faith that embeds everybody regardless of creed, status and race. Our moral obligation is to ensure we transcend in our missions to touch the untouched with God's due justice as He predestined for all of His Sons and Daughters alike. May God's power through His Spirit shall endow on us the impetus and the ability to realign all faith Christians whoever they are, in all levels of life in order to live harmoniously together as one people of the same faith.

Prayer:

God of mercy worthy of all praise, help us to realize our true Christian purpose. Re-align our faith to our Lord and King Jesus Christ as our hope of Salvation. Help us to avoid the many kinds of lifestyles that could enslave us. We pray that may your Holy Spirit give us wisdom to perceive your word and to accept those lowly in society. We pray against all forms of systems at work today, which takes advantage on the expense of the poor and in the power of your Spirit dear Lord, empower us as we strive towards eradicating all prejudices, so that everyone may experience your justice and your purpose for our existence meaningfully in Jesus' name we pray,

AMEN!

Conclusion

The most recent report by UNFPA on violence against women in the South Pacific, found that ever-partnered women between the ages of 15-49 had experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner at the following rates: 64% in Fiji, 68% in Kiribati, 46% in Samoa, 79 %in Tonga, 64% in Solomon Islands, and 60% in Vanuatu, 48% in Nauru, 53% in FSM, and 37% in Tuvalu. This data shows that 2/3 women in the Pacific encounter violence in their lives.

The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) aware that the statistics on Gender Base Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women, Girls and Children (VAWGC) in Oceania is very high and very prevalent in many Pacific Christian Communities and homes. Therefore in response, the 11th PCC General Assembly that held in Auckland 2018 resolved and developed a 5-year Strategic Plan (2020 – 2024) in which Gender Equality & Inclusion is one of the core values emphasised across all programme pillars.

As part of the PCC response to the statistic above, Just and Safe Pacific Communities for Women and Men Programme (J&SPCW&M) develop collective actions as strategic plan to advocate and address GBV for this year-2022 for the 16days of Activism- Global campaign.

These are the following collective activities:

- Breaking the Silence Sunday,
- Advocating Neckties
- Women's Stories,
- Devotional for 16 Days, and
- Regional Gender Equality Theology- Church Leaders Retreat- (A partnership action between PCC and CWM)

This year, the theme for the 16 days of Activism is "Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against Rape, "a concerted effort to mobilize against the heinous crime of rape. It is time to put an end to GBV, to stand with the survivors, understand their feelings and to empower them.

Bibliography

- Bird, Cliff. Framework Paper: Human Dignity and Gender Equality from a Biblical and Theological Perspective. UnitingWorld , 2016
- Haber, Susan. A Woman's Touch: Feminist Encounters with the Hemorrhaging Woman in Mark 5:24-34, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, 26:2 (2003) 171-192.
- <https://fj.usembassy.gov/on-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women/?On>
- <https://licc.org.uk/resources/the-abuse-of-power-against-women/>
- International Day for the Elimination, of Violence Against Women - U.S. Embassy in Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu (usembassy.gov) sited 20/10/2022
- Murphy, Ngahuia. Te Awa Atua, Te Awa Tapu, Te Awa Wahine: An examination of stories, ceremonies, and practices regarding menstruation in the pre-colonial Māori world. MA
- Siera, Bird "Creating Safe Spaces" in Touch our Lives, Heal our World , Fellowship of the Least Coin-Circle of Prayer. Vol 26, 2022
- Thesis, University of Waikato, 2011.
- The Spinoff, April 17, 2019.
- Valamotu Palu "Healing Hope" in We Lift Our Voices for the Integrity and Well-being of God's Creation!" Fellowship of the Least Coin- Circle of Prayer. Vol. 25. <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/17-04-2019/decolonising-your-body-maori-attitudes-to-periods>



Pacific Conference
of Churches 2022