

TALANOA TOKTOK

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Keep kids safe

PCC staff train on safe church policy



The ayes have it ... Secretariat staff agree to a policy on child protection

RESPONSIBLE workplaces must put in place to ensure that children are protected at all times

That means that churches - as places of worship and teaching - must discuss, form and implement policies to ensure the protection of children. The Pacific Conference of Churches provided training this month for all staff on the importance of child-safe policies.

Management, supervisors and staff from all programmes including maintenance were involved in the on-day workshop. The training included a module on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, reporting mechanisms and workplace ethics.

This was the first workplace training for 2022 and comes before the implementation of a Safe Church Policy in Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Solomon Islands. The PCC policy on Workplace Sexual Exploitation and Abuse comes into effect this year.

Training of PCC staff was a collaboration between the Secretariat's Child Protection Team and UNICEF.

Staff members discussed the issues of child protection and sexual exploitation before making suggestions on internal policies, reporting mechanisms and the involvement of law enforcement agencies.



**We lead
the way**

With its Safe Church Policy, the Pacific Conference of Churches has taken the lead in the regional ecumenical movement.

The policy will set a platform for safe child policies throughout Pacific churches and this will be reinforced by training for individual organisations.

UNICEF has provided funding and technical support for this project which has taken longer than expected to be implemented due to COVID-19.

The PCC will provide templates for organisations and guidance on how to draw up their own safe church policies.

Churches will be encouraged to introduce local traditions and values to ensure that children are protected at all times. This will also protect church integrity.



Sailing into new waters ... a PCC-Uto Ni Yalo Trust community project teaching Beqa youth to sail canoes

Save the ocean

YOUNG people will discuss the challenges of preserving the ocean from the ravages caused by development. At a village summit in Bua, Northern Fiji, young people will also discuss alternative development models using traditional values and the wisdom of their elders. This is part of a project involving the Pacific Conference of Churches and the Bua Urban Youth under the Reweaving the Ecological Mat programme.

Young people from Bua who live, study or work in Suva will travel to their home province on sustainable sea transport - an ocean-going canoe - to take part in the discussions.

Based on the outcomes of these talks, the PCC will help young people draw up an eco-friendly model of development which ensures responsible stewardship of land and sea resources.

The Bua Province is resource rich with vast forests of native trees, viable fishing grounds and deposits of bauxite. But there is concern that the people do not fully benefit from the resources and developers have caused environmental damage.



Project supports youth

THE Pacific Conference of Churches and Uto Ni Yalo Trust will collaborate again in 2022 to support youth projects.

In their first joint project this year, the Uto Ni Yalo - Fiji's ocean-going canoe - will sail to Bua carrying PCC staff members.

Last year a similar collaboration at Narikoso Village in Kadavu saw young people learn about sustainable sea transport and stewardship of the ocean. The Uto Ni Yalo returned to the water this month after an overhaul. It will also deliver two drua (double hulled canoes) for use by Bua youth.





The Marshalls and nukes

IN July 1946, the United States detonated a nuclear device over Bikini Atoll in what is now the Marshall Islands as part of Operation Crossroads. "In the Marshall Islands, the US tested a total of 66 atomic and hydrogen bombs in 12 years. Six islands were vaporised by nuclear weapons and hundreds of people were irradiated. Today, more than 40 years later, many islands are still uninhabited.



No testing here ... protesters at a rally in Suva (File - Wansolwara)

Students up treaty bid

MARSHALLESE university students are at the forefront of propose changes to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Supported by the Pacific Network on Globalisation and the Pacific Conference of Churches, the students will address the Youth Meeting on the State Parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in June.

The students want specific changes to articles in the TPNW dealing with reparations to victims of nuclear fallout from testing by France, Great Britain and the United States beginning in 1946. Thousands of Pacific islanders were injured or displaced by the nuclear tests. Others suffered deformities at birth due the effects of the nuclear exposure of their parents.

The Marshall Islands Students Association will lead a march to mark Nuclear Victims and Survivors Day on March 1.

PANG and the PCC with the World Council of Churches made representations to Fiji's Parliament in 2019, shortly before Fiji ratified the treaty.



Nuclear facts

The US, Britain and France carried out nuclear tests in the Pacific

Troops and civilians from Fiji, FSM, Kiribati and Maohi were affected

Nuclear fallout has left lasting impacts on humans, vegetation and marine life

Britain and France refuse to compensate survivors of irradiation



Moves towards unity

THREE regional ecumenical organisations are moving towards greater unity through a binding constitution. The South Pacific Association of Theological Schools, Pacific Conference of Churches and Pacific Theological College have been working on streamlining activities since a suggestion by member churches in 2013. Not all churches in the Pacific belong to all three organisations but they have similar and sometimes overlapping objectives. Headed by former Methodist Church in Fiji President, Reverend Dr Tevita Banivanua (pictured), a joint committee hopes to have a draft constitution ready by November for church leaders to discuss.



A Green Church

Farm concept draws interest



Funder boosts efforts

OUR Lomana Na Vulagi eco-farm project has received generous funding from the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

This money will help the PCC implement a number of development projects over the first and second quarters of 2022.

Part of the project includes the creation of an eco-school to provide virtual training for young people around the region.

CHURCHES have expressed interest in the Lomana Na Vulagi Farm concept introduced last year.

The Pacific Conference of Churches 50-acre farm produced cattle and pineapples for sale last year with cassava expected to come on line in the first half of the year. The farm concept was delivered to leaders of the Methodist Church in Fiji in February, with ministers showing interest in the responsible land use and possibility of generating revenue to help reduce poverty, improve employment and generate income.

After talks with Fiji's Ministry of Forests, preparations are underway to begin a carbon sequestration activity on a designated portion of the farm as an organisational responsibility towards energy use mitigation. The PCC hopes to influence churches to implement similar projects.



Carbon responsibility a mission partner offsetting his carbon footprint at the PCC farm