



## **“Together We Are “Kōñe Jubar”<sup>1</sup>** Pacific Church Leaders’ Statement at the Conclusion of the 2023 Pacific Church Leaders’ Development Conference, Majuro.

### **Affirming the Pasifika Household of God**

1. From the 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2023, Leaders from 18 Pacific Island Churches, along with representatives of national and regional ecumenical organisations<sup>2</sup> met in Majuro, in the islands of *Jolet jen Anij* (Gift of God) known as the Republic of the Marshall Islands.
2. We give thanks to God for this opportunity to gather in the North Pacific to reaffirm our relationship as a Household of God that encompasses the whole liquid continent and to ensure that all voices in the “household” are heard.
3. We recall that:  
we breathe the same air, cooled by the same breeze, received our blessings and livelihood from the same ocean, illuminated and energized by the same sun, guided by the same stars and received light from our neighbour, the moon which affects the ocean and tides. More importantly, we are connected by our abiding love for our Savior - Jesus Christ. This love is reflected by our never-ending struggles to exemplify His Teachings in our daily lives.<sup>3</sup>

### **Solidarity and Justice for the Nuclear Legacy, Climate Crisis and Sustainable Development**

4. We have listened to the cries of our sisters and brothers as they continue to struggle for restitution from nuclear testing and climate injustice which has scarred generations, physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. We have shed tears with our daughters and sons, sharing their deep hurt over the past, their current struggle for justice and their hopes for a future which brings healing, wholeness and life in abundance.
5. At the same time, those of us experiencing the same struggles have been encouraged with the awareness that we are not alone and that we can learn from each other’s experiences and support one another in our common work for justice.
6. In solidarity, we will amplify their voices in our communities. Together we will seek justice wherever it is to be found.
7. We commit to developing platforms for joint intra-regional advocacy for nuclear justice.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation from Marshallese: “strongly rooted as ironwood”

<sup>2</sup> Nauru Congregational Church, Kiribati United Church, United Church of Christ Pohnpei, United Churches of Christ Congregational Marshall Islands Jarin Rarik Dron, Presbyterian Church in Fiji, Cook Islands Christian Church, United Church in the Solomon Islands, Ekelesia Kelisiano Tuvalu, Eteretia Porototani Maóhi, Eglise Protestante du Kanaky-Nouvelle Calédonie, GKI-Tanah Papua, GIDI, Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa, Methodist Church in Samoa, Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu, Methodist Church in Fiji, Catholic Church in RMI, Reformed Congregational Church RMI, National Council of Churches in Australia, South Pacific Association of Theological Schools.

<sup>3</sup> Hon. Christopher J. Loeak, Minister in Assistance to the President & Environment, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Address at the Opening of the Pacific Church Leaders’ Development Conference, 19 May, 2023.

8. We renew our call for a nuclear-free and independent Pacific. We urge all countries who seek to be friends of the Pacific to commit to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.
9. We call on states responsible for nuclear testing in the Pacific to take responsibility for their legacy of destruction and commit to equitable reparations.
10. We renew our call for the immediate cessation of plans for dumping of irradiated wastewater from the Fukushima Nuclear Powerplant into our Pacific Ocean. We urge the member states of Pacific Islands Forum to boldly explore diplomatic and economic punitive measures to deter such unwanted and harmful activities which threaten the biodiversity and future of our Blue Pacific.
11. Noting recent information that highlights the cross boundary implications of Deep Sea Mining, we reaffirm our calls for a Pacific-wide ban on both exploratory and commercial Deep-Sea Mining.
12. As we continue to face the brunt of Climate Change, we confess that we have not done enough to prick the conscience of our congregations and governments. We pledge to do more.
13. We reaffirm that climate finance for adaptation, mitigation, loss and damage, and relocation by polluting countries is akin to receiving “30 pieces of silver” for the betrayal of Pacific Islanders who seek, first and foremost, a rapid phase out of fossil fuels.
14. We call on all Pacific Island countries and those who would seek to be our friends to commit to and campaign for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty for a rapid, coordinated, transparent and equitable transition away from fossil fuels, including, in particular, access to renewable energy & low carbon solutions for our region.
15. As we note the widespread, extractive nature of development activities on land and under the sea, including the impacts of circular migration, we recommit to working to ensuring that principles of economic development resonate with those whole of life traditional practices and experiences accumulated over thousands of years,<sup>4</sup> for the wellbeing of all.

### **Strengthening our Household**

16. As we seek to continually strengthen the Pasifika Household of God, we commit to more collaboration in mission areas of education, development, social justice, self-determination and ecumenism by:
  - Endorsing the proposed Charter for a Pacific Ecumenical Community, for finalisation based on constructive comments made in our meeting, and adoption by the Councils of the Pacific Theological College and South Pacific Association of Theological Schools and the 12<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches.
  - Committing to more local ecumenical engagement by member churches of the PCC and call on PCC to support such efforts.
17. We reaffirm our commitment to solidarity and joint advocacy for the self-determination of Maohi Nui, Kanaky and West Papua.

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<sup>4</sup> Hon. Christopher Loepak.

18. We reaffirm just and equitable relationships between the United States and former and current Territories that take into account historical injustices and inequalities.
19. In solidarity with our Aboriginal and Torres Straits sisters and brothers, we urge our Pacific Diaspora in Australia to support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and to vote in favour of enshrining a Voice to Parliament for First Peoples of the land now called Australia.
20. Concluding our meeting on a "Thursdays in Black,"<sup>5</sup> and we reaffirm our commitment to ensuring to just and safe Pacific communities of women and men.
21. We receive the Safe Church Framework and Guidelines from the PCC for consideration and use by our churches. We also encourage PCC to explore programmes on positive masculinity and work with perpetrators.
22. We receive with appreciation the report on the planning and theme for the 12<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. We express our thanks to our hosts of the upcoming Assembly, for the introduction of the context and theme for the Assembly, "Do Kamo: Khrist! Transform us into your New Humanity!" We look forward to our Church Leaders' Pre-Assembly in Lifou, the venue of our first PCC General Assembly (1966).

*We seek a report on these issues at the next Pacific Church Leaders' Meeting.*

### **Gratitude**

We express a deep "kommol tata" (thank you) to our hosts from the Jarin Rarik Dron – United Church of Christ Congregational in the Marshall Islands, the Fijian community in Majuro and the traditional leaders, Republic of the Marshall Islands Government, Civil Society, who have together nourished us spiritually, physically and intellectually and reminded us that we are "Kōñe Jubar," strong like ironwood, when we are united.

We extend a hearty Korabwa to the Kiribati Uniting Church for the kind hosting of the delegation during their stopover in Tarawa enroute to Majuro.

We express our appreciation to the National Council of Churches in Australia for their support for this gathering.

***Deaconess Tamalesi Makutu  
Deputy Moderator, Pacific Conference of Churches  
Chair 2023 Pacific Church Leaders' Development Conference  
Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2023***

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<sup>5</sup> Started by the WCC in the 1980s, the "Thursdays in Black" campaign is a form of peaceful protest against violence and rape, especially taking place during wars and conflicts. The focus of the campaign is to challenge attitudes that cause rape and violence.