



Talanoa Toktok

Quarterly Newsletter of the Pacific Conference of Churches

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Busy start for GS

THE year began with a flurry of visits by the new General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan, travelling to Indonesia with the World Council of Churches delegation.

While there he travelled to West Papua which has been part of the Pacific Conference of Churches' programmatic programme focus for 40 years.

Rev Bhagwan signed a letter to the Indonesian government, calling for justice in Papua, an end to persecution of the indigenous people and greater dialogue between the State and concerned parties.

One of the observations of the visitors was the provision under the Indonesian constitution for Papuan autonomy.

The Pancasila (Five Principles) of the Indonesian state allow for—Belief in one God, a just and civilised humanity, a unified Indonesia, democracy led by the wisdom of the peoples' representatives and social justice for all.

Rev Bhagwan observed that Indonesian law allowed for Papuans to raise their own flag and sing their anthem. This was allowed in 2011 and then stopped.

He said this would be a good starting point



Churches must help end violence

CHURCHES must help to end violence against women which exists in many Pacific communities.

Speaking at the Spotlight Initiative in Samoa, PCC General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan said the church must embrace its role in ending violence against women and children.

He said the challenge for the region was how to use the scriptures to break the cycle of violence.

“We are connected by our Christian faith and also in our role as faith communities as agents of social change, in particular the potential for faith communities to be agents of societal transformation in eliminating violence against women and girls,” he said

The European Union has allocated 50 million Euro to the project and Pacific countries will be critical partners in this initiative.

Civil Society leads talks on a comprehensive people-based plan



Relocation guidelines

THE Pacific Conference of Churches has taken the lead in developing relocation guidelines for regional communities.

Discussions—based on relocation in Fiji—have looked at the cost of relocating villages and people affected by climate change.

Frances Namumou, who is the head of the PCC's Climate Change Initiative, said it was important to identify how communities could be moved and who would fund such moves.

"In the example of Vunidogoloa, the government and community shared the cost of relocating the villages about two kilometres to their new site," Namumou said.

"It might not be possible for all Pacific governments to contribute that sort of funding.

"And we don't know whether the Green Climate Fund will be able to provide money for this kind of project."

The Green Climate Fund is an agreement for developed countries to provide money for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects.

The PCC as a member of the Pacific Island Climate Action Network (PICAN) has met member organisations from regional civil society organisations to formulate an initiative with which to strengthen current relocation plans and guidelines.

These discussions found that funding sources for relocation must be found and communities must be consulted before they were asked to move to new sites.

"We also identified the need to address in communities the psychological and spiritual aspects of relocation'," Namumou said.

"Pacific islanders have a deep connection to the land and this cannot be overlooked in relocation guidelines.

"We will continue to build on learning experiences of relocated communities to create a realistic, practical guideline."

Discussions will continue in 2019.

The Briefing

New bishop

ARCHBISHOP Fereimi Cama is the new head of the Diocese of Polynesia.

He replaces Winston Halapua who retired last year. Cama is a former teacher who has worked as a priest in several parishes around Fiji. He is the first Fijian to hold the position.

Christchurch solidarity

FIJIAN churches stood together in solidarity with Christchurch after the shooting in two mosques in the city.

About 150 people attended a peace vigil at the Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral to commemorate the deaths of 51 people.

The event was a collaboration between the Fiji Council of Churches, Anglican Church and the Pacific Conference of Churches.

Australia trip

SIX representatives of Pacific churches met Australian Foreign Minister Melissa in February.

The visit—by members of the Vanuatu Presbyterian Church, the Vanuatu Council of Churches, Anglican Church of Melanesia, Archdiocese of Honiara, Papua New Guinea Council of Churches and PCC—was a signal in new relationships in the region.

The group met Aboriginal community leaders, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Australian church leaders.

There will be a follow up visit to the Uniting Church this quarter.



Leaders review development

TRADITIONAL knowledge and Christian values must be part of a new regional development model.

Church leaders met in Nadi in March and agreed to investigate the possibility of developing grass root economies based on traditional and Christian values.

“We must seek Pacific Christian models of sustainable

development which will glorify God and ensure the flourishing of creation,” Reverend James Bhagwan said.

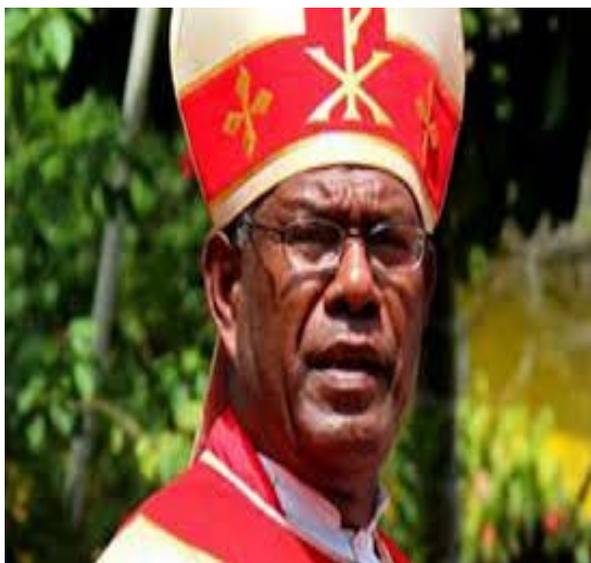
The event was a collaboration between the PCC and the Institute of Mission and Research of the Pacific Theological College.

Discussions centred around the possibility of developing alternative economic and eco-

logical systems.

There were several theological reflections and academic papers delivered on alternative development models.

A highlight of the event was the inclusion of young people from the University of the South Pacific and the Pacific Theological College to allow for a diverse range of views.



Takeli stands down

THE former Archbishop of the Church of Melanesia, George Takeli, stood down early in March to stand for the general elections.

Takeli was unsuccessful in his bid but stood on a platform of good governance and just leadership.

His term as archbishop was to have ended this year but Takeli stood down earlier than planned to contest the polls.

City sees God's hand

IN Fiji's capital, Suva, a garden is taking shape among high rise offices and residential flats.

Using traditional and modern methods of agriculture, the Urban Garden Project will offer Civil Servants and office workers an insight into how to make use of spaces around their homes to grow healthy food to fight obesity and non-communicable diseases,

Executive says yes to strategic plan

United way forward

AN ambitious strategic plan has been approved to guide the Pacific Conference of Churches Secretariat until the end of 2023.

PCC Moderator, reverend Dr Tevita Havea, led discussions on the plan at The Pearl, west of Fiji's capital, in January.

Also present at the meeting were Fiji-based members of the Executive Committee and PCC Management.

The planning focussed on key areas of PCC work until the next General Assembly which is expected to be held in Kanaky (New Caledonia).

Executives discussed the need to identify key

partners in programme activities and outlined a comprehensive plan to bring about financial self-sustainability.

Rev Dr Havea stressed the need for the organisation to create its own source of funding.

"I am encouraged by the discussions on how to bring about financial sustainability of the PCC,"



Havea said after the meeting.

"If we can use agriculture and Pacific values to drive our economic initiatives we will be able to teach regional communities about the possibility of developing alternative economies which are meaningful to the people of the region."

The Executive Committee looked at how to improve partnerships, programmes—on stewardship, ecumenism, self-determination, women and children.

It drew up a comprehensive strategy to integrate migration and Non Communicable Disease into current work plans.

THREE regional ecumenical organisations will cooperate after a decision by regional leaders.

The Pacific Theological College, South Pacific Association of Theological Schools and Pacific Conference of Churches have identified areas of collaboration,

Some collaboration has started on joint funding of projects and sharing technical staff.

The move is designed to increase organisational efficiency