



Pacific Conference of Churches

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15th February, 2021

Pastoral Letter from the Moderator to the leaders of the member churches of the Pacific Conference of Churches

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ;

I bring you greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour and do hope that this letter finds you in good health and ready for this new year.

Post Covid-19

Our realities were challenged in 2020 with the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic to our islands. Our prayers for the safety and health of our people were accompanied by the overwhelming belief in our islands that our Lord was present with us and would help protect our islands from this pandemic.

We give thanks and praise to our Lord that our islands and our people are, to a large extent, protected not only from the Pandemic -faring well in terms of addressing and practicing preventive measures to protect our people from this pandemic- but also from these extreme weather patterns in terms of being increasingly resilient and prepared for such natural calamities.

Severe Tropical Weather

Mother nature reminded us in no uncertain terms that climate change was still an existential threat to us all in the region. For the last several weeks, our region was under a continuous low depression that remained over the southern parts of our region, resulting in 4 low to medium tropical cyclones and continuous rain and wet weather in other parts of the region. For Fiji and Samoa and Tonga, together with Niue and parts of Vanuatu, they were just emerging from Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasa; a category 5 tropical cyclone that resulted in 4 deaths in Fiji.

In no uncertain terms these extreme weathers patterns and their increasing frequencies are a stark reminder that climate change is real and continues to pose an equally daunting existential threat to our Pacific peoples.

Breakdown of Pacific Regionalism

Just as we received the good news that a vaccine against Covid-19 was to be distributed in the region that was going to bring the pandemic under control, our region suffered yet again, this time from political turmoil, fracturing it and bringing it to its knees. The election of the new secretary general of our premier political governing body in the Pacific caused a scission within the members in 5 Pacific Island member countries expressing their disappointment in not being heard and given the opportunity to lead our premier regional body.

Within the same space of 12 hours, our premier academic institution, the University of the South Pacific, had its Vice Chancellor removed by force in the middle of the night by the Fiji government and deported the next day out to Brisbane. Fiji stated that several actions by the Vice Chancellor were not in line with the premises of his work permit, as the reason for his deportation together with his wife. Many observers of the region saw this act as a deliberate act of injustice against a person, against an institution, and against the region as a whole. This action by the Fiji government is a violation of human rights and an abuse of power; it is a clear move to undermine the integrity of a regional academic institution and the integrity of the region.

In these 2 seemingly unrelated actions, the integrity of our efforts to address issues that of common concern to us as a region is directly attacked; the underlying understanding amongst of the leaders of the Pacific (the gentlemen's agreement) as to the rotation of the top position of the Pacific Islands Forum between the 3 sub-regions was made void in the election of Henry Puna from the Cook Islands.

Most importantly the trust between the Pacific Island Countries that has been the cornerstone of the regional construct, is now broken. The Northern Small Island States of Palau, Kiribati, Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands and The Federated States of Micronesia have declared their intention to leave the Forum and have indicated that the respective countries were given a year to look into the implementation of the decision.

Call for Unity from the Churches

As leaders of our respective churches and countries, many have come to us seeking advice and clarification; looking for an explanation of what happened and more importantly, what is going to become of our region?

As the Pacific Conference of Churches, our role is one of prayerful discernment; Our role is to be prophetic during times of distress and chaos when all seem to be broken; Our role is to be the voice of the powerless and the voiceless in the midst of injustice; Our role as the church is to remind our people that in these times, we have to continue to walk in humble fellowship with our God as stated in Micah 6:8.


We are reminded that we as the Pacific Conference of Churches need to Love Mercy and show mercy to those who have been unjustly treated; We need to act justly and condemn injustice where we see it happening; most importantly we need to do all of that with love for our neighbour and love for the other.

In electing the new Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, our political leaders have failed in keeping the Pacific region together as a body. They have failed in discerning the consequences of their actions and have failed to give integrity to their decisions as political leaders.

I invite you all as leaders of the member churches of the Pacific Conference of Churches to use this season of lent to pray for our region, pray for our leaders and pray for the unity of our Pacific region. We as church leaders, need to step up, discern our future and be prophetic in our voice as the church calling for the integrity of regionalism to remain and for our leaders to find ways to remain together as a region.

As churches, we need to BE TOGETHER and SHOW OUR UNITY AS A REGIONAL BODY IN BEING TOGETHER AS THE BODY OF CHRIST. May the peace of God which passes all understanding be with you and with your people during this time of uncertainty and may you find strength in Christ who redeems and calls you to be humble servants of God's Kingdom here on earth.

'Ofa atu moe lotu



Rev. Dr. Tevita K. Havea

Moderator Pacific Conference of Churches