



The Cry for Climate Justice

General Secretary Rev. James Bhagwan began his journey to Glasgow for the global climate change negotiations on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi. He travelled to *Lomana Na Vulagi* or Love the Stranger Farm with others from the Pacific Conference of Churches to plant the first trees and crops on their newly purchased land. When he gets home, the team will plant more trees to offset the carbon required to get the Pacific delegation to the meeting.

James and Iemaima Vaai took the voices of the people, the land and the sea to the COP26 (Conference of Parties). The urgency of the climate emergency is something they know well. With villages like Vunidogoloa already forced to move inland because of constant flooding, they campaigned tirelessly to keep the global temperature rise below 1.5° Celsius. Fiji plans to move more than forty more coastal villages soon. Other Pacific nations have nowhere to go.

James and Maima as she is known took every opportunity to make Pacific voices heard in negotiations dominated by the rest of the world. Who wants to see their homes washed into the sea or gardens

drowned in salt water? Who wants to tell their mother or grandmother that they have no choice but to leave the land and sea that has been home for generations? Who wants to always buy food and water because traditional gardens are saturated?

“We are not drowning, we are fighting.”

Pacific Climate warriors

The PCC and member churches are increasingly identifying the climate crisis as a spiritual crisis. Pacific peoples are demanding more action and real commitment while planting trees to absorb emissions. They are determined to survive.

In Glasgow, James [gave](#) a two minute intervention at the High Level Plenary at COP26: “... Our interconnectedness to this common home forces us to a radical solidarity, across gender and generation, for climate justice for all.

In this spirit, wealthier countries must lead in reducing their own emissions, and in financing emission reductions of poorer nations.

Industrialised countries must support the vulnerable countries, and finance adaptation.

They must put into action a mechanism for loss and damage, with additional funds.

Love calls us to seek climate justice and restoration. It calls us to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, to protect them, and their ancestral domains, from predatory economic interests, and to learn from their ancient wisdom. Indigenous spirituality could restore our understanding of interdependence between land, ocean, and life, between generations before us, and the ones to come.

Love calls us to transformation of systems and lifestyles. This transition away from fossil fuel-based economies must be just, securing livelihoods and wellbeing for all and not just some.”



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As Christians, we recognize that the dangers of these climate impacts are as much of a spiritual crisis as it is an existential crisis. We have allowed a culture of greed to permeate the core values that are integral in our role as stewards of creation. For the sake of our ecology and the future of our Pacific, we strongly call on world leaders at COP26 to step up and strengthen their commitments towards securing global net zero and keeping 1.5 degrees well within reach.

Lemaima Vaai
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 Pacific Conference of Churches

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Hope is found in Action

A story from Netani Rika of the Pacific Conference of Churches.

As the Covid-19 Pandemic stretched its tentacles towards the Pacific last year, it became obvious that small economies would be deeply affected.

Job losses loomed. Hunger – especially among the young, elderly, those with disabilities and women – was a real threat.

At the Pacific Conference of Churches, staff hastily bought seeds and found root crop cuttings to plant the Food Bank on land in the Central Business District of Fiji’s capital, Suva.

While government and international agencies discussed the medical crisis, PCC staff planted tomatoes, cabbages, kumala (sweet potato), beans and cassava.

The food garden – clearly visible from the main government and United Nations offices – yielded meals for children in squatter settlements just as Covid-19 hit Fiji.

From this Food Bank, children were fed at least one square meal a day, allowing them to attend school with dignity.

Seeds were sent to Tonga and Vanuatu where similar initiatives helped the vulnerable members of society.

That food garden planted a seed in the hearts and minds of PCC staff and the secretariat has purchased 50 acres of land at Lawaki – two hours from Suva - to continue the Food Bank concept.

Launched on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the farm will be completely off the grid, using solar energy and water from a nearby creek.

It will be free of chemicals, generating fertiliser from the 24 cattle on the farm and other organic material.

The initiative is called *Lomana Na Vulagi* (Love the Stranger), and will provide food for those in need, revenue for PCC and an on-site eco-school for young Pacific people.

Local communities have been approached and will be involved in all aspects of the farm with opportunities for learning and employment.

Central to the farm's ethos is the involvement of women, young people and people with disabilities along with using time-tested traditional agriculture and land management methods.

Over 70 *yaqona* or kava plants have been planted among the trees, without disturbing the local forest.

More than 1000 cassava and 200 *kumala*, 20 avocado trees and local vegetables have been planted in the initial ground breaking.

Pacific Conference of Churches

Formed in 1966, the Pacific Conference of Churches brings together 30 member churches from 18 countries and territories across the region. It is a place where Pacific people can make decisions about their own future, develop their own theologies and actions, and work together for justice. Programmatic decisions are made at its five-yearly Assembly.

The current priorities of PCC are:

- responding to climate change
- supporting self-determination
- eradicating gender-based violence
- empowering young people
- building better relations between faith groups.

