Conch Shell

Communicating good news from PTCEE
Pacific Theological College Education by Extension

News from PTCEE February 2017

PROUD TO BE A PRODUCT OF THIS PROGRAMME

It was a joy to brief those newly arrived on campus for the 2017 academic year about PTCEE's work across the islands, and to meet a great ambassador in our midst. Father Harry Gereniu from ACOM, Solomon Islands gave an inspiring testimony during our orientation session, recalling how he completed PTCEE Certificate and Diploma studies in 2006. Since then, his theological education has risen to Bachelors level and now he's pursuing a Masters residentially. As we enjoyed *talanoa* in the PTCEE office, Fr Harry looked around in appreciation. 'It's wonderful to see the actual place where all these courses come from', he said. 'I'm proud to be a product of this programme and thank God for it. Keep up the good work!' Well, we'll try. When PTCEE provides the early building blocks in Theological Education, and then the investment bears fruit, it's a cause for great rejoicing. And we have great hope that many more ambassadors will spread the word.

Remember though: most people studying through PTCEE across Oceania will never set foot in PTC, and they don't have to! We offer Theology for All for Life.

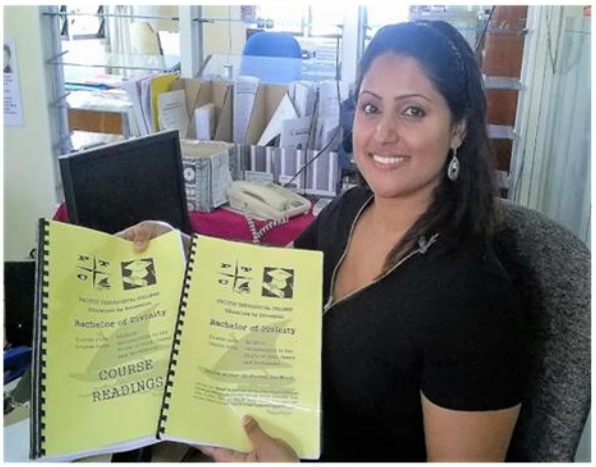
Study in your own environment, at your own speed, through courses posted to your door. More information in the PTC Handbook 2017 online at **www.ptc.ac.fj/ptcee**. Call us on landline **+679 330 7989**. On mobile, WhatsApp and Viber **+679 9080754**. Find us on Facebook: **Ptcee Suva**. Twitter **@PTCEdbyEx**. Mail us at PTCEE, PO Box 388, SUVA. Fiji.

SELINA SHOWS THE WAY!

We congratulate Mrs Selina Koi for completing her Certificate in Theological Studies in 2016. 2017 sees a move to American Samoa where, alongside her husband Fr Sam Koi, she will be serving in Anglican ministry and encouraging others to try PTCEE courses for themselves.

MORE BD BY EXTENSION COURSES

It's good to report that new courses are being written and edited constantly, the most recent being *Introduction to the Study of John, James and Revelation* authored by Dr Michael Sandford of Sheffield University in the UK. Dr Michael taught for a Semester at PTC and has taken contextuality seriously, bringing to the course some apt Pacific reflections and pertinent questions. We're grateful to him but naturally want to encourage far more Oceanic theologians to contribute to PTCEE's expanding course pool for the BD. If you're reading *Conch Shell* and teaching at one of our islands' Colleges, or elsewhere and would like to write a course for us in your particular theological/ecumenical discipline, we would love to hear from you. All sorts of conversations about curriculum development are being had just now at PTC and it's exciting. Could you write a new, Pacific-breathed, contextual, contemporary course for us and write it to BD standard? We even pay a little! Potential writers – do get in touch.



Right: Rev Sitiveni Raikasakasa, progressing steadily on the BD by Extension programme and collecting his latest module. Could YOU be our next enrolment?

We're giving thanks in 2016 for 54 courses sent out, 23 completed, 101 assignments marked and returned, 23 new enrolments (about 2 a month), 11 new enquiries already in 2017 and a database that says former and current PTCEE students together since 1996 number 883! That's a LOT of theological education from committed Pacific people. Are you part of that continuing story? To God be the glory!

I commend to you our sister Lila, a deacon of the church at Nausori. ***(In the spirit of Romans 16.1!)***

PTCEE IN PRACTICE

Here's some lovely news about Mrs Lila Wati Sundram who's been taking PTCEE courses for quite a few years now, progressing gently and steadily. Lila's a great reflective practitioner. She always writes far more than she needs to in assignments, and still worries it isn't long enough or good enough! (Though what our sister writes is well worth reading, actually).

For the past four years Lila has been part of a ministry training group taught by the Anglican Diocese of Polynesia's Rev Sue Halapua (pictured receiving the chalice). To our delight, Lila was recently ordained Deacon by The Most Revd Dr Winston Halapua, having already been recognised as a licensed lay minister. She's attached to St Lawrence, Nausori and is making a great contribution there. As you might imagine, we were keen to hear whether studies with PTCEE had been at all helpful to Lila on the journey to becoming a Deacon, alongside her main training. After all, PTCEE isn't an ordination programme of itself. This is her reflection.

'I had the desire to know more about theology and to broaden my knowledge of the Bible. As well as studying the course books I've been attending the Friday tutorials on the PTC campus and find them helpful, interesting and challenging. At times I had thought of dropping my studies but received great encouragement from the Director and other students, and from my husband and family. Everything has worked together well and harmoniously.

Looking back I see that God has been working in my life since I was young and He continues to guide me everyday. I was a Hindu and became a Christian later, baptized in the year 1981. At one time I got very sick, was hospitalized, and everybody – doctors, nurses, family members, even the Priest - lost hope that I would come out alive. The prayers of my God-parents, Priest-in-Charge and my husband helped me greatly in my recovery. Though I was suffering, I had peace in me and was not afraid of operations, injections and medicines. All these years later, the Lord Jesus continues to work faithfully in my life and today I am an ordained Deacon in the Anglican Church. Thanks be to God.

How are you putting your PTCEE studies into practice in your community, Church, workplace, family? Let us know. We'd love to hear about it.

Director's Message
TOO MUCH LEARNING CAN DRIVE US INSANE!

While he was making this defence, Festus exclaimed, 'You are out of your mind, Paul! Too much learning is driving you insane!' But Paul said, 'I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth.
(Acts 26.24-25)

These are great verses from Acts. Verse 24, particularly, can make us smile. It resonates with how Theological Education among lay people is perceived sometimes. Don't give them too much learning: it could give them crazy ideas! The combination of his rigorous, religious learning and personal, evangelical testimony gave Paul a tough educational task. He needed, on the one hand, to speak intelligently about Jesus's death and resurrection to both the Jewish and Gentile communities. On the other hand, he needed to share his own amazing Damascus experience in a way that was credible and appealing. Pharisaic schooling and personal testimony had to work in harmony for the good of the Gospel. Do you think on the whole Paul got the balance right? Good question for an assignment topic!

The uphill struggle of Theological Education! Revd Dr Val having climbed Levuka's 199 Mission Hill steps

At PTCEE, be reassured. We're not like Festus. We don't accuse you, our students, of insanity when your theological knowledge increases. Nor do we ask you to suppress 'Damascus Road' experiences. We simply ask you to study faithfully in the light of Scripture, Tradition, Reason AND Experience. In that way, God helps us to mature in faith and knowledge holistically and relationally. And no-one needs to be driven insane… Grace, peace and prayers,

Revd Dr Val Ogden (Director: PTCEE)

NEW FACE AND VOICE AT THE ADMIN DESK

Admin needs are ever growing, so Miss Fareen Nisha joined PTCEE as full-time Programme Administrator in June 2016. Nisha – please introduce yourself!

'Well, I'm Nisha from Nadi. I'm a Muslim by faith tradition and believe in loving God and loving neighbour. My tertiary education has been in Sydney, Australia and at FNU. Since then my experience has been in legal firms, and in educational administration. Generally my stay so far has been very challenging and everything seemed novel to me. Going to Chapel for morning devotions, reading references, preparing course materials and other correspondence. As days passed things seemed exciting and I realized that I can make a humble contribution here. I hardly had any knowledge about the Christian faith but working here has educated me a lot and I am daily willing to learn more. I wish to deliver my best and continue to serve you all.'