

Reformation 500 at the Pacific Theological College

Voices of participants

Meaning of the Reformation for the Pacific and the participants?

(...) for us in the Pacific, we are the fruit of the Reformation. – Rev. Billy Wetewea, PTC

Mission and ministry is coloured by the Reformation. – Rev. Amy Chambers, Principal of St. Johns' Theological College

History is gone, Luther is gone, but we are very excited because of the legacy left behind and many of the things he said and wrote about have changed the world (...) – Bishop Jack Urame, ELC PNG

(...) Pacific islanders could ask themselves “that was centuries ago and in Europe how does it affect me today?” (...) It has affected the gospel and the teaching of Jesus and its relevance for us today. (...) I suppose knowing our history is part of being a good Christian (...). – Edward Vakatora, PRS

All Christians with the exception of the Catholics have been affected theologically and in their Christian lives. (...) The Catholic Church went back and studied itself including its liturgy and has now accepted almost all that Luther criticised. (...) The centrality of the scriptures in the liturgy, sharing the communion with all, the use of vernacular, are some of the changes. Luther's was a sincere effort to renew the Church. – Rev. Dr. Mikaele Paunga, PRS

This is the first time I am hearing about Luther and his Reformation. (...) I was shocked to hear that Luther's movement was dangerous and violent. – Shazaiah Acraman, Christian Campus Crusade

The Reformation was not bad at all, it is good because we have to reflect on how we are doing. (...) For us in the Pacific we look at it from a cultural world view. Here in Fiji, the Melanesian and Polynesian culture is really strong. Whatever they say, the questions are formed based on the environment, the place they come from, the atmosphere, the people. – Ralph Solomona, PRS

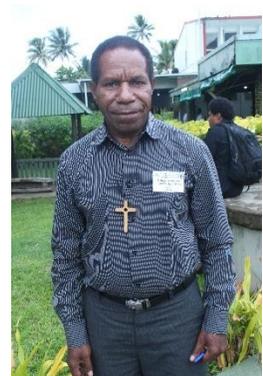
(...) being at the PTC helps me see the importance of the Reformation because up until this point the Reformation has been a subject in the classroom. – Faafetai Aiava, PhD Student, PTC



Rev.
Billy Wetewea



Rev.
Leinamau Seru



Bishop
Jack Urame

Reformation as a task

Reformation is always in the church, sometimes the church goes to sleep and it needs to be awakened. - Rev. Nicodemo Sopepa, PTC

(...) Reformation means a renewal or revival of a corrupted structure or something that needs to be revived. In the Pacific the reformation is still taking its toll. – Rev. Tomasi Jale, Davuilevu

(...) it is a good day to contextualise or reform our context as well.
(...) To reform the context is not to wait for Germany to fix a problem on our shores. We need to reform our own context. (...) Later, we can tell Germany what happened and they can learn from us. – Faafetai Aiava, PTC

We are at the moment following the liturgies and music from the missionaries. These hymns have been there for centuries. To be co-creators of God, why do we not create new songs? – Rev. Mereti Rabonu, St. Johns' Theological College

This celebration is inspiring and helps us to look again at how we came to be. Sometimes we all think our churches are the best without realising that everyone is glorifying God. (...) I would like to see some changes in the church's tradition. (...) despite it being history it is quite 'alive' and I think I can do some things before the next 500 celebrations. – Rev. Leinamau Seru, PTC

Pacific culture and individualism

In our culture individualism is not there but this is beginning to go away (...) as there are differences in wealth or education. – Sainimili Baisagale – Diaconess Training Centre

Culturally we are organised around community life. That does not mean that the individual does not exist. (...) balance gospel and culture. We cannot be critical only of the gospel and take all of the culture, we need to be critical of the culture too. – Rev. Billy Wetewea

Individualism is creeping into our community. (...) The communal function is to be seen in the body of Christ. – Rev. Mereti Rabonu, St. Johns' Theological College



Rev.
Amy Chambers



Edward
Vakatora



Sainimili
Baisagale

In the Pacific, culture still affects how we do things including the churches. (...) There is unity in diversity. – Rev. Amy Chambers, Principal St. Johns’

Influence of the missionaries in the Pacific

The Pacific was very receptive to the gospel. (...) We are still (...) decolonizing the theology received by the missionaries. - Rev. Nicodemo Sopepa

The churches (...) still maintain links with the ‘mother churches’. – Rev. Billy Wetewea

We were critical of some of the keynote address criticising the missionaries. We think the missionaries (...) stopped bad practices such as cannibalism. (...) But things were taken from our culture and we need to bring those back. – Mereti Rabonu, St. Johns’ Theological College

Role of women in the Church

(...) in Fiji women are the strongest backbone. – Sainimili Baisagale – Diaconess Training Centre

At the PTC the women are organising most things. (...) The women are the backbone of every function. We always there to support and (...) from our hearts we are glad to be part of the celebration. – Poikapane Maitoga, President, Women’s Fellowship, PTC

For example, the church should go out to support girls who have babies before marriage. We need to encourage women. – Rev. Leinamau Seru, PTC

(...) I think that there is still room for us to talk about this [women ordination] and talk through this. Because there is always the question that arises when women engage in the ministry is: “Are they our ministry partners or ministry competitors?” So, you live within that tension of are women in ministry to compete with men or are they in ministry to be partners with men. The cycle of discussions, agreements, and disagreements continues even after 30 years of women ordination in the ACoP and this will continue on (...). – Rev. Amy Chambers, Principal of St. Johns’ Theological College



Rev. Dr.
Mikaele Paunga



Poikapane
Maitoga



Ralph Solomona

Insights about Ecumenism

Ecumenism is a blessing to the Church - Rev. Nicodemo Sopepa

One thing about ecumenism and interfaith is not to view unity as collapsing differences.– Faafetai Aiava, PTC

For instance, the suggestion to bring the denominations under one liturgy is good in forming one liturgy in unity and in communion but it is not easy (...). – Ralph Solomona, PRS

Pacific church leaders have organised the Pacific Conference of Churches for dialogue among ourselves and so we have had good relationship especially with the mainline churches. The focus is we are one in Christ. (...) We are not following Luther, we are following Christ.

– Rev. Dr. Mikaele Paunga, PRS

(...) we continue with dialogue and share things, meetings to discuss ecumenically issues faced by our society not by just a single church. (...) Together solidarity, as Christians, as churches. (...) What kind of Christianity do we want to save for our children tomorrow? (...) We have to create an atmosphere or church that is inviting for the children tomorrow to enjoy and my greatest fear is that if we cannot act now, our children tomorrow will be lost.

– Bishop Jack Urame, ELC PNG.

I need 'to journey' to know my context in the Pacific. (...) Christ who makes me a reformed person will help me to do the work outside regardless of the culture, race or gender – Sainimili Baisagale – Diaconess Training Centre.

For me the church of Christ is one body and I go to work and to learn from the best experts regardless of their denomination. (...) I discovered that myths about restrictions for women in the Catholic faith were untrue. One day an old priest asked for my assistance to help him with the chalice, I found this going against everything I've come to know about the faith. For me this was an enlightenment. – Rev. Amy Chambers, Principal St. Johns' Theological College.



Rev.
Mereti Rabonu



Faafetai Aiava



Shazaiah Acraman

(...) [Ecumenism] is easier for mainline churches. It is quite different with the Pentecostal churches, because the doctrine and methodology is different. – Rev. Tomasi Jale, Davuilevu.

It is important to understand each other and their churches and the way we see things through different lenses. (...) I am really impressed (...) by the flow of things between Lutheran and Catholics (...) and how we can work well together (...) is sending a message to others out there. – Edward Vakatora, PRS.

Interviews and transcript by Ruby Quantson and Rusila Nabouniu; edited by Friederike Keller.



Rev.
Nicodemo Sopepa