

Weave us together to
Proclaim Life

Weekly Blog



Greetings Te Haahi Weteriana, tēnā koutou katoa,

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.” Psalm 23 vs 6

September is a month dedicated to women’s ministry within Vahefonua Tonga. Last Sunday over 3,000 women gathered from around New Zealand for a virtual service of worship. All these women renewed their commitment to serve God as worship leaders in the Methodist Church of New Zealand. It was a service with a difference. President Setaita was the preacher and the service was co-led by the National President of Methodist Women’s Fellowship, Siniva Moli Vaitohi and the President of the Tongan District Fellowship Silila Kilikiti. This was the first time an on-line service was held for the national annual roll call of Tongan Methodist Women. The service also highlighted children’s ministry with Athaleyah Veikune, a 6 year old girl who recited psalm 23 for the children’s ministry.

During the week, we discovered a new children’s book called the Great Realisation. This is a story of hope in a time of change. It is a poem which was first performed in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and has a message of hope and resilience. Stories like the Tongan roll call pick up this message of hope and resilience.

Over this last year there have been many stories of hope in a time of change. Saikolone notes this in his reflection this week. As we begin to reflect on the year that has past, we are also conscious of the new leadership that will begin. Not only of a new President and Vice President for the Methodist Church of New Zealand, a new General Secretary and for the country a new Government.

We pray that the spirit of hope and resilience that has been present with us this year will continue and that our leaders both within the church and in our world, will feel the presence of God with them as they face the challenges that are ahead, not alone but with the support of us all.

This week, Synod members from Tauivi have received an email to vote for the President and Vice President elect. We ask you to read the profiles of each of the candidates, and to prayerfully consider those you believe will take us on the next steps in our journey. Just like when we vote in our general election and referenda – take time to prayerfully analyse the policies and the issues, consider carefully how these policies will impact on people, but particularly those who are vulnerable or marginalised or undervalued, and don’t forget to VOTE.

Thank you Saikolone for your reflection and the timely reminder.

’Ofa atu fau, Nga mihi nui.
Setaita and Nicola

Matthew 14:22-33

In this short bible reading, the disciples were excited to see Jesus walking toward them on the water. They were also absolutely terrified even after Jesus

identifies himself and tells them not to fear. Peter was the first one to make a bold move and things were going successfully until he comprehends the unfeasibility of what he’s doing and starts to sink.

The rest of the story echoed something we've become accustomed to in our journey with Matthew; a call out for help, being healed or being saved or being nourished, then things calm down, and worshipping God continues as normal.

In my humble opinion, an emphasis on how Jesus suspended the natural order in order to feed 5,000 men with little food and plenty of left overs, misses a vital component of Matthew's concern. Also, an emphasis on how Jesus suspended the natural order in order to walk on water misses the point as well.

Why Peter was unable to maintain himself on top of the water as Jesus did, is a good question to ponder. But answering it with the extent of one's depth of faith, is dangerous and contradicting faith itself. In our current struggle with COVID 19, using faith as a tool to suspend the natural order of things will not be helpful.

In my world (not sure about yours), you stand on water you will sink unless you use special tools or technics. The depth of one's faith has nothing to do with whether one can walk on top of the water or not.

Like the disciples' excitement or the lack of it, in seeing Jesus walking on water, my journey with Matthew's emphasis on the kingdom of God conveyed new excitement for me. But in particular, the presentation of chapter 14, starting with the two kingdom's feast (14:1-21) and the reality check for those who want to be a fellow kingdom builder with Jesus (14:22-33).

The reality check in Matthew 14:22-33 is an affirmation that building of the kingdom of God here on earth or working to make sure that God still rules the world, was not and is not and will not be easy. It is also an affirmation that it is a step we must take if we are to be true followers of Jesus or if we still want to make a difference to this world.

Matthew in this passage alluded to the vital tool for this building project and that is faith. Faith (according to Mother Teresa) is love in action and from my experience, faith is the willingness of the heart to step into the unknown trusting that God will be there regardless of whatever happens. Faith is both the willingness of the heart and the stepping out into the unknown, which Mother Tressa define as "love in action". Feeling excited in seeing Jesus walking on water is important but putting one's feet into the water is also or maybe more important.

I know from personal experience that sometimes the heart is still willing but the feet never wish to step out, especially when things aren't going the way it should. I am often too easily consumed by my own fears that I stop faith(ing).

Participating in building the kingdom of God in our world now, even with faith that can lift mountains, is seemingly more impossible. But Covid 19, reminded us of something we choose to forget, that kindness and compassion is our true nature, and in the midst of chaos, we can still bubble up a community where all live well, all have enough and all have a decent life. Now I wonder if what seems impossible might just be that we've stopped stepping out into the unknown. We have been assured that there is no storm, no chaos, no dark and no despair that will prevent Jesus from being there with us when we step out into the unknown. None of us are outside of Jesus' reach, even me, with all of my little faith who always argue with God in my moments of doubt.

The upcoming election is another opportunity presented to us, so that we show our true nature. We follow Jesus (our fellow kingdom builder), and step out in faith, trusting the promise that all will be well.

**Rev Saikolone Taufa
Kaeo Kerikei Union Parish**

Prayer for this week

O God, O Love,
even in these difficult days we know that you hear us,
that you care, and we ask that your love and compassion
and justice may be incarnated in us,
as we go about the work of healing your world
and all its peoples, to work for the
coming of the your Reign on this earth.
Let it be so.
Amen and amen.