



# Pacific Conference of Churches

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**Pacific Conference of Churches Intervention to “Faith and Science: Towards COP26” High Level Meeting - April 2021**

I acknowledge the custodians of the various places from where we gather online, all part of the sacred creation. I pay my respects to the people whose identity is intertwined with land and sea and give our love and share peace with elders, mothers, fathers and children – past, present and future.

We pray for grace, peace, truth, joy, life and wellbeing – the peace of God upon the land, upon the ocean and all who call it home and all who will walk and sail lightly upon her.

I am here not as a leader but a servant of the Pacific Churches, of mothers and fathers of Christian communities, of congregation members, representing some 80 percent of the almost 15million people of the Pacific, and custodians of the majority of the Pacific ocean. One of the lungs of this planet.

A deep spirituality permeates the communities of the Pacific and is at the heart of the Pacific people’s relationship with each other and the environment.

Spirituality is integral to the way we interpret, understand and interact with one another, and with the natural world. It shapes our indigenous knowledge into wisdom and guides us to act with gentleness and gratitude for the abundance that surrounds us.

This spirituality is enhanced by Christianity and the many faith traditions of the world which have grown roots in our diverse Pacific communities. These faith traditions are shared with the vast majority of those who share this planet.

Thus our Pacific spirituality calls us to embody a profound respect for creation as an interconnected web of life, living as a caring and resilient community, and valuing wellbeing above profit. It calls us to be custodians of God's Household in the Pacific. It calls us to be guardians of the Blue Pacific.

The reflections and discernment and life-affirming responses of such spirituality remain as critically important as scientific and political conversations in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; the ongoing climate crisis; the health and vitality of the ocean which binds us together into a liquid continent and nurtures and breathes life into this planet; and to unsustainable development that are rooted in an ideology of scarcity, valued in economic terms and extractive by nature, and if left *laissez faire*, threaten highlands, coasts and the deep blue sea.

Our indigenous spirituality and knowledge - the wisdom of our ancients who read the stars and travelled across our mighty ocean, in their giant canoes, millennia before European discovery and conquest, considered themselves part of the ecosystem, not above it.

Our Pacific understanding of the Christian faith affirms living this ecological household by recognising the sacred cords of (*Oikos-logos*, *Oikos-nomos* and *Oikumene*) ecology, economics, and ecumenicity which we believe is the key to protecting life in our common household (the *Oikos*) of the whole planet.

Climate change has reminded the world of the sad reality that economics no longer deals with the whole household—with the economic subsystem's impact on society as a whole and its social, ecological, cultural context. The current focus on economics alone has led to the dangerous assumption that the household is only made up of one room.

There is a famous Native American saying, which is becoming to sound more and more like our future reality if the hunger for economic gain overshadows the concerns of the rest of the household:

“Only when the last tree has died and the last river has been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize we cannot eat money.”

The Western model of development, based on an ideology of domination and extraction has severed the sacred thread that connected economics, ecology, and morality with devastating consequences.

This type of development denies that an ecosystem is a system whose elements interact with their surroundings, the ecological, social, intellectual, and spiritual context as a unit - the whole household.

We of the Pacific, on the frontline of climate change bear testimony to the fact that what has been touted as Sustainable Development, is in practice anything but.

We call the world to a new way, a new normal that honours the practice of our ancestors of living in harmony with and not exploiting nature, our sister and brother creation.

We echo the call of His Holiness, Pope Francis for an ecological conversion that brings us into further solidarity with our human and non-human family.

In our Household of God in the Pacific, this has been described as “reweaving the ecological mat” to renew and strengthen the sacred cords of ecology, economics and ecumenicity which we believe is the key to protecting life in our common household.

Resolving the climate crisis is dependent on the ethics and values systems that govern our relationships with the environment and each other.

If there is bad political governance and a lack of social justice, the consequences can be seen in how the community treats its land, streams, rivers, forests and marine resources.

Conversely, if the significant contribution the natural environment provides for the community's well-being is appreciated, this is reflected in how the community governs itself, shares its resources and dispenses justice.

We believe that changing the narrative of development and reweaving it into one that is truly ecologically framed is the key not only to our surviving the climate crisis, the social and economic crises in our region, and across the planet, but also to our flourish as one household.

Thank you and may God bless you all.

***Rev. James Bhagwan,  
General Secretary***