

# Training In Mission Programme Newsletter

Issue 5

August 20, 2017

## TIM Programme

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## Why Church is Bent Over?

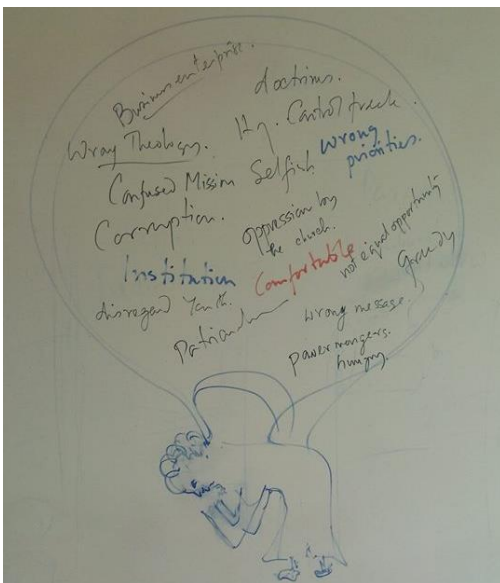
Bending over of the churches is growing because of people's new understandings. They are spreading wrong theology or wrong messages that are being delivered to the congregations. The church has been institutionalized and corrupted, youth are not highly considered and hierarch has been embraced too in the church. These are some of the few things that have caused the church to lose its relevance around the globe.

Many people understand that going for theological college is to study the word of God and to know more about God, which I feel it's not true because no one can study and know God he/she is too big to be studied and known. Many people are meant to believe that what is preached in the church is always right and should be followed that way without questioning it because it's the word of God, but sometimes the teachings and preaching are done in a wrong way and misleads many people. People follow what they are being taught in the church by the ministers because they went for theological colleges to study.

Another thing the church is using is the structure of the church, From the head or ministers until the children and the youth, this has not been working well for the church as it promotes dominance some few individuals within the church. The ministers in the church have become more important than others because people think ministers are next to God and instead of serving the people it's the ministers now that are being served by the people and the mission of God has been forgotten. We need to understand the mission of Jesus. Jesus' mission about challenging the norms and reaching out to the marginalized, it is timeless because the purpose and core of his mission aims for a radical movement towards change.

People or the congregations need to work together and connect their shoulders to give mercy for them in the church. Change relationship between ministers and the community. Also preaching and coming down to help people so that the church grows better and everything goes well, as "Luke 13: 13-17" talks about. When Jesus saw the woman, who was crippled by evil spirit, he stopped preaching and came down and addressed the social issues of the woman and he said "Woman you are set free from your infirmity". We need to follow Jesus' mission, he brought his life to serve everyone who needs help, also we need to break all the hierarchic structures so that we all connect in one because we only have one God. As Christians, we need to understand the purpose of why we need to go to church and what's our part in the community.

Article by: Felauai Opetiaia



# Giving Back to God's Creations

Nature is so paramount to human kind world overview, and human kind has an obligation to safeguard nature as we are all God's creation but people have not taken this so seriously, we have become so anthropocentric and have forgotten that God is in nature and nature is in God. Human kind was given the obligation of looking after nature by God in the book of Genesis 2:15 which says, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it".

Most people think that the creation of human beings was the most important part in Genesis but in one of the mornings when we had devotion in mango bay resort besides the sea, I heard the birds in the trees and sky, I saw the trees and water worshipping God early in the morning.

And after reading the scripture in the gospel of John 15:15, which says, "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my father I have made known to you.", Dr Sudipta Singh asked as to symbolically give life to a dead branch which we did by collecting fallen leaves and flowers and placing it on the dead branch.

***"I don't understand why when we destroy something created by man we call it vandalism, but when we destroy something by nature we call it progress".***

The branch looked so nice when the team symbolically gave life to it and then I realised that we each have the responsibility in the world to look after nature with care and treat all creation with reverence. In the same vain I also learnt about how we as people have failed our responsibility of taking care of nature and that's why we are facing the challenges of global warming and climate change.

We do not see God in nature but we only think of making money out of the nature that has breath and worships the Lord God. As Ed Begley Jr in his quote said, "I don't understand why when we destroy something created by man we call it vandalism, but when we destroy something by nature we call it progress". We need to take responsibility of God's creation because God is in nature as well and realise our ability.

**Article by: Wellingtone Bwalya**



# Unheard Voices of Today

***“Frustration grows as you realize you are irrelevant to them, and so, your voice will never be heard...”***

Imagine being in a room filled with people all immersed in their own conversations and concerned with their own issues. You are standing at the front of the room shouting as loud as you can to settle the crowd so they can listen to you. You shout and work your way around the room trying to get someone’s attention.

Frustration grows as you realize you are irrelevant to them, and so, your voice will never be heard...

Throughout the TIM Programme there has been a reoccurring theme of listening or recognizing the “unheard voices” in biblical scriptures, in societies, and even within the context the various participants are from. Majority of the time the unheard voices come from the unseen or irrelevant persons and causes in society. In New Zealand, the unheard voices we encountered were those of the homeless, we learned that many who are homeless never expected to be forced into that situation. In Fiji (Suva), it was the unheard voices of the slums that caught the attention of the group. The slums were located on the outskirts of Suva city, they are apparently obvious, yet, the living conditions are ignored by many Fijians. In Kiribati, it was the voices of those who accept climate as being a real problem who are unheard. As a country Kiribati’s fight against climate change is unknown to most of the world; not only the world but many villages and islands in Kiribati are oblivious to the situation the country is facing.

It is interesting using the phrase “unheard voices”, because one of the first thoughts that surfaces is why are these voices not being heard...what is blocking or apprehending them from being important or relevant? The common factor that these various voices share is that their issues or problems are not seen as problems to others. Many “turn a deaf ear” (Caribbean phrase) on these voices because no one sees their problems as important. More importantly, those who can help to solve the problems of the unheard voices are not being effected, hence they disregard these people. This statement is not only about the rich, but it is a description of the everyday person who crosses a homeless person, drives past a slum with their head straight, and those who do not believe that climate change exists. Similar to the Bible, many of the marginalized or exiled did not have a voice until Jesus decided to listen to their problems and encourage others to listen as well. Jesus gave the marginalized an opportunity to be heard.

As participants of the TIM programme we are constantly challenged to explore how mission is possible within the brooding contexts of today’s empires. One of the key ways to doing so is by learning to listen to the unheard voices and to recognize the struggles of the marginalized. Imagine if all the problems of the marginalized were actually pushed to the fore front rather than the focus being on war, economy, and global trading. It is the responsibility of humanity to care for one another and care for all of creation. The mission against empire can be argued to be just that. To allow the marginalized or those exiled and irrelevant to society to be given a voice or to finally let their voices be heard.

**Article by: Renita Barnes**

# Understanding Jonah's Humanity

## ***The Sign Of Jonah: Reading Jonah on the Boundaries and from the boundaries written by Gregory C. Jenks***

During one of our bible sharing sessions, we read and then shared opinions about Daniel. However, I could not find humanity in the heroic aspect of Daniel and other prophets. In reality, we are not perfect and we are flawed and disobedient. So, finding a character in a Bible similar to ours, I learned about Jonah. Although I have heard much of Jonah's story in church, it felt like I was studying the book for the first time again. This article was more intelligible to Jonah. I was able to understand the meaning of Jonah's story, and what it meant to me. The writer explained Jonah with the Bible, the Border, and the Belonging. Throughout the Bible and other historical documents, he was able to explain about Jonah entirely.

The writer first analyzes his own borders and religious affiliations through his stories. Through his stories, I was able to understand how important the religious affiliation in the writer's society was. A positive aspect of ambiguity talks about his stance and ideas on Israel and the Palestinians. The hometown of Jonah was a marginal small country village. He was different from those prophets at the time. He went to the marginal cities, and gave up his sense of belonging. His story reminds us of what belongs to us and our borders. He was uncertain of the call of God. He hesitated and ran away from the calling of God.

Then He went a large city called Nineveh by God. The story of Jonah shows our uncertainty. Jonah has humanity like us, unlike Daniel. Jonah is honest. He represents our real mind not a perfect, unrealistic mind. The writer interprets Jonah with a larger perspective, talking about Jonah and Jesus using other writings and materials that found Jonah. The Writer said, "Sign of the Jonah is god's call and a call to live beyond religion". He defined the story of Jonah as compassion and generosity.

As I read through the passage, I thought to myself what the meaning of Jonah meant to me. I could find many images of Jonah in myself. I don't appreciate what God gave me, and I think it's my gift. I get angry when things get taken away from me, but she gives to me freely, and say 'How can I do this without me?' like Jonah. My three B (Bible, Border, Belonging) keep changing. Throughout this essay, I learned that I should not judge anything and accept it further with various perspectives. I will not be afraid to challenge myself, to challenge and to look afresh.

**Article by: Eunsoo Oh**

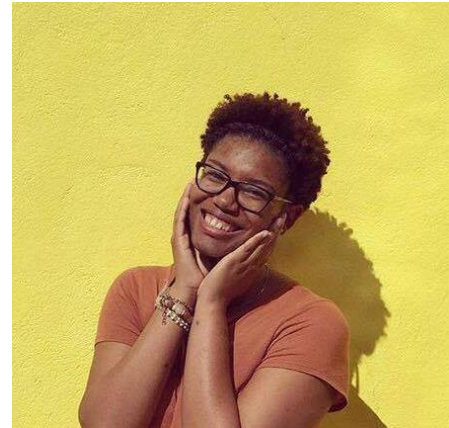
# Get to Know!

## Felauai Opetaiia



Talofa Lava! I am Felauai Opetaiia from one of the Pacific countries called Samoa. Before I come on this program I was the only one of our eleven siblings who stayed home with my parent to help them look after our business and the kids. So, I did every man/boys and women/girls duties in my family. But I have a plan now in my life when I go back, I will change my life from home to workplace. I learned more and faced many challenge here.

## Renita Barnes



Hello, I am Renita Barnes from the Cayman Islands. I really enjoy art in many forms like dance, music, painting, poetry and media because it gives people different ways to express themselves and share their creative talents. Taking on new challenges or trying new things has always been something I have enjoyed and been fearful of because it encourages me to push myself out of my comfort zone, and learn more about myself at the same time.

