



Faith seeks equality.

Equality for women and girls in the Pacific

Lent Event supported projects in 2018

A pastor in Vanuatu attends a workshop on the importance of valuing men and women equally, re-interpreting Bible passages that have been used to keep women silent and oppressed in his culture. When he returns home, he takes the unusual step of washing the pots and pans for his family. This happens outside his home, as is the custom, and women returning from the market are horrified to see their pastor engaged in this work.

“Pastor!” they cry. “Don’t wash the pots and pans! We’ll send a girl from the village to do that work for you!” **“No,” says the Pastor, “It’s fine, I can wash the pots. I’m happy to do this work for my family. Why don’t you go home and ask your husbands to do this work too?”**

It’s one small but telling example of the changes that are happening – and must happen – across the Pacific if women are to take their place as valued members of society.

Violence against women and girls is more common in the Pacific than almost anywhere else in the world – attitudes like these help explain why. The local church is leading the way toward change - mostly because the Scriptures are a central source of wisdom for a culture where 98% of the population identifies as Christian. Biblical teaching is far more influential than ideas about ‘feminism’ or ‘human rights’. It requires unpicking centuries of misrepresentation of biblical texts as well as cultural attitudes; retraining pastors and equipping both male and female advocates against violence; providing opportunities for education and economic development. The Pacific isn’t alone in the need for this complete reorientation of thinking toward women and men, as we’ve seen all over the world this year.

Your gift to Lent Event supports the local church throughout the Pacific who are providing:

- Training for women and men to become advocates against domestic violence
- Workshops and networking that actively promote the equality of women and girls
- Scholarships that promote opportunities for women in male-dominated theological courses
- Livelihood opportunities for women in disadvantaged communities to make a living.

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Faith takes action on climate.

Climate action and disaster preparation

Lent Event supported projects in 2018

Tuvalu, along with Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and other tiny nation states in the Pacific, constantly finds herself wrung out by violent storms that are increasing in intensity. King tides are bigger, more frequent and flood more homes. Seasons of wet and dry are less predictable. Fresh water is harder to come by. It's becoming more and more difficult to grow local food and catch local fish because of rising levels of salt in the earth and increasing water temperatures. Almost all the food in Tuvalu is mass produced, plastic-wrapped and imported from Fiji, Australia and New Zealand. Overpopulation is a problem and so is sewage and sanitation. Most young people know they'll have to live somewhere else to find good jobs and a future.

In the midst of all this change, almost 90% of Islanders hold to the Christian faith and the church is critical to helping people cope and adapt. Some are resistant to what is happening right in front of them, preferring to cling to the hope that God will magically intervene to save them. Others are determined advocates, calling to one another and to us to be better caretakers of the earth.

We're partners with the Church in Tuvalu and Kiribati in particular, supporting them as they grapple with faith in a changing climate. But we also provide training, support and emergency response to other countries in the Pacific, both before and after disaster. Our main goal is to save lives by equipping leaders and acting early.

Your gift to Lent Event supports the local church throughout the Pacific who are providing:

- Immediate response on the ground during disasters providing food, clean water and shelter
- Disaster preparation and assessment training in vulnerable communities
- Counselling and care for people impacted by disaster
- Resources for churches and communities to help them understand from a faith perspective where God is amid suffering, and what their role is in caring for God's earth
- Training and resources for communities who are aiming to make their food and water sources more sustainable in a changing climate

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Faith tackles poverty.

Beating poverty through Education

Lent Event supported projects in 2018

Fiji, known to many Australians as an idyllic holiday destination, is full of creative, friendly and warm-hearted people. And faith is an active ingredient in the culture, where churches are seen as the bedrock of the community. Aside from being active worship congregations, they assist in everything from recovery after frequent cyclones to providing education.

Without much in the way of resources, the church has stepped up to be a light within their community – in this case an informal settlement on the outskirts of Suva where people live without reliable water or electricity. Many who live here were attracted to the city from the country, hoping for better lives for their children. Education is key to their dreams.

Although schooling itself is free, the resources to attend like books, uniforms and school shoes, are expensive. Many children – particularly girls – are at risk of being pulled out of school or missing out altogether because their parents are unable to meet these commitments.

Your gift to Lent Event supports the local church in Suva who are providing:

- School uniforms and resources for children to attend school
- Scholarships for selected students who show promise and have a good chance of succeeding at university
- Support and encouragement to families to enrol their children in school and assist with homework, in spite of the many challenges relating to electricity supply

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