

BREAK THE SILENCE SUNDAY LITURGY

19TH NOVEMBER 2023



PACIFIC CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES



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Background

16 Days is an opportunity to show collective actions and solidarity in efforts to end VAW. In 1993 the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against women defined violence against women "as any act of GBV, which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life. The 16 Days runs from the 25th November, UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to the 10th December, Human Rights Day. The campaign spans these 16 days in order to highlight the links between ending GBV and Human Rights values and that Gender Based Violence (GBV) Human Rights Violation.

This year, the theme for the 16 days of Activism is "Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against Rape," a concerted effort to mobilize against the heinous crime of rape. It is time to put an end to GBV, to stand with the survivors, understand their feelings and to empower them. Break the Silence Sunday is a Sunday before 16 Days of Activism begin. "Break the Silence Sunday " instigated by the Christian Network Talanoa (CNT) in 2013. It is a united attempt to break the culture of silence and shame around violence against women by Church leaders. Since Break the Silence Sunday was initiated by CNT that hosted by the House of Sarah, It was then observed in Fiji's Methodist, Anglican Diocese of Polynesia, Catholic, Baptist, Salvation Army, Orthodox churches and at some independent evangelical fellowships.

Introduction

'Break the Silence Sunday' will enable Church leadership to display a clear knowledge and ability to engage their people on issues of Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG), promote key messages against violence, and using the authority of the Church to support individuals and families to reflect on their role and responsibilities in preventing violence against women and children. It will also enable the breaking of silence within the Church community (clergy and laity) about the violence which has been happening in people's homes, combined with a realisation that the levels of violence are neither normal, nor acceptable. Faith leaders can have a powerful impact on people's attitudes and beliefs, and his or her leadership is important, particularly on social issues such as violence against women and girls and can speak out and use their influence to communicate intolerance for violence against women and girls in all forms. PCC took on board this initiative in 2021 and work in partnership with the House of Sarah, to expand this campaign annually across the Pacific region and global partners from then and into the coming years. PCC Member churches will rotate to do a reflection/sermon for Break the Silence. The sermon was prepared by Nenase Kavafolau of the Free Wesleyan Church Tonga and 2022 is prepared by Dr Fransina Yoteni from West Papua.

Just and Safe Pacific Communities for Women and Men created three activities to observe this year's 16 Days of Activism.

- Break the Silence Sunday Liturgy
- 16Days Devotional for the 16 Days of Activism that was prepared by PCC Member churches.
- 16 3 mins video stories from our member churches who can share their experiences in the work on Violence against women/children.

Why Break the Silence?

As Churches, we have confessed our negative contribution to the structural violence enacted upon women of all age and social status in the Pacific. Patriarchal structures of leadership and decision making, biblical interpretation and attitudes towards women in faith communities have underpinned the psychological, emotional, physical, sexual and economic violence that Pacific women have had to endure.

We have and continue to painfully acknowledge the abuses of power and trust experienced by women and children in our Pacific Churches, and that there are places where the gospel of love, inclusion, preference for the least among us in society and of peace and abundant life for all is preached and held out as the ideal but not practice.



Why Break the Silence?

In the 11th General Assembly in 2018 the member churches and national councils of churches which make up the Pacific Conference of Churches reaffirmed their condemnation all forms of violence against women and children as a sin and called on the Christian community in the Pacific to ensure that the dignity of our women and children is protected at all times.

Here in Fiji, our church leaders have a stepped forward to being part of campaigns to name violence against women and children as “A Sin” and that our faith “Says No to Rape and Violence against Women and Children.”



The Pacific partnership with UN Women as the Just and Safe Communities of Pacific for Women and Men programme is part of the Pacific Conference of Churches' 2020 to 2024 Strategic Plan.

Why Break the Silence?

The new initiative will take a multi-layered approach to address violence against women and children through education, attitudinal change and messages from church leaders. The programme will support the development and implementation of a Safe Church Policies and Codes of Conduct in member churches. The role, in partnership with SPATS will also include coordinating the WEAVERS programme.

Break the Silence Sunday Campaign would help churches to engage regional and national leadership on the issue of violence against women and girls and to deliver strong messages to faith communities on the necessity of education, attention and response to this issue. "There will also be a specific focus on increasing the participation and access of women in Church leadership and theology and on the role of Church Leaders as advocates.

In a year like no other, violence against women has intensified drastically, and ending this shadow pandemic will require more investment, leadership and action. I urge you all sitting here today, break the silence, and be the change. It starts with you.

LITURGY

LET US COME TOGETHER IN WORSHIP AND RAISE OUR VOICES
UNTO GOD.

*PRAYER OF INVOCATION (Please note: letters in **BOLD** are for
all to read together)*

(L) O come Creator and Mysterious God. As you hovered over
the Moana in the beginning, so move in our midst now.

(All) God is in this place and in every place.

(L) God our Father and Mother hear our voices:

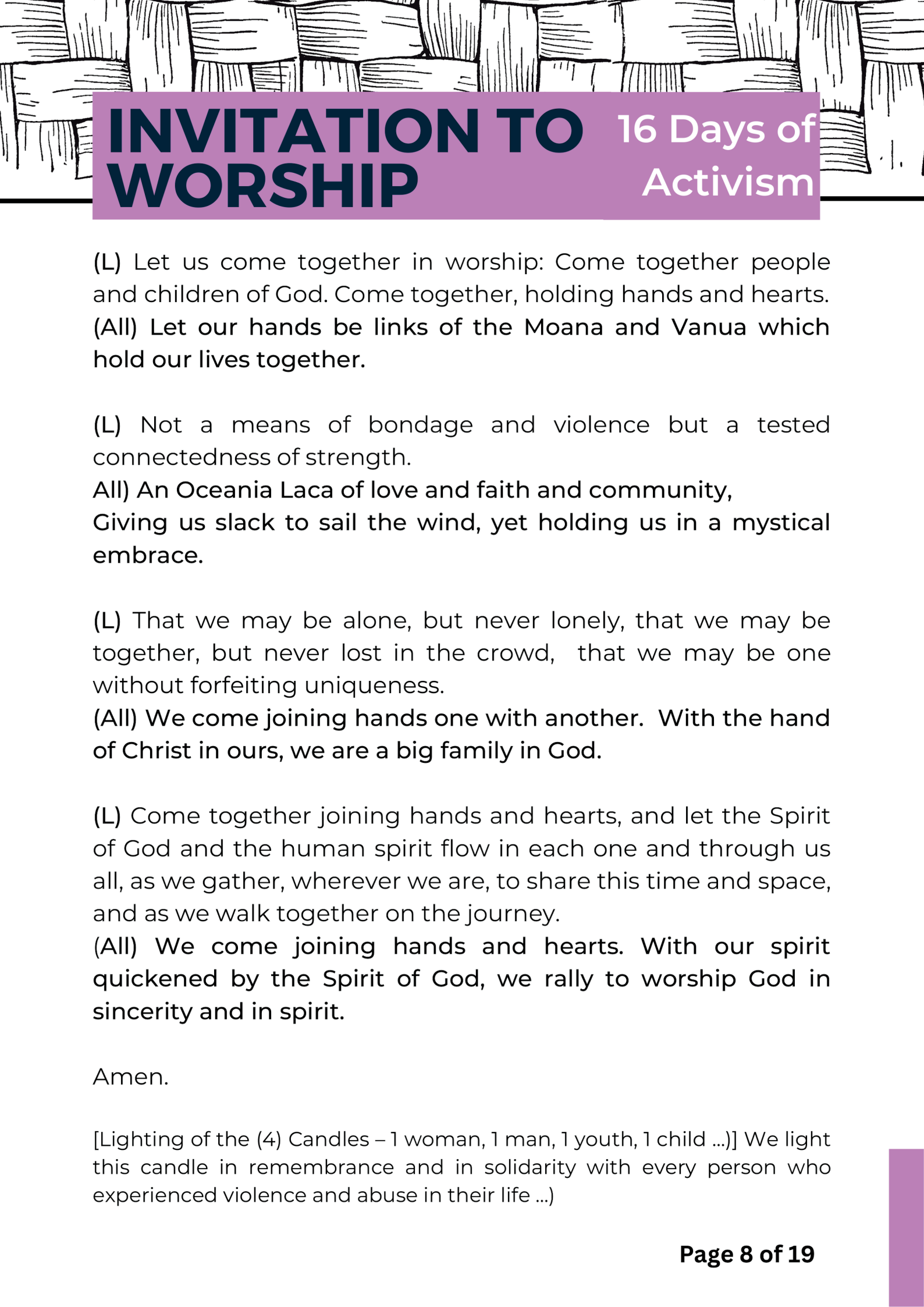
(All) We your children cannot be silent anymore.

(L) God the Son, Redeemer and Friend hear our stories.

(All) We your children cannot be silent anymore.

(L) God the Spirit – Life-Giver, Comforter, and Companion, hear
our pains.

(All) We your children cannot be silent anymore.



INVITATION TO WORSHIP

16 Days of
Activism

(L) Let us come together in worship: Come together people and children of God. Come together, holding hands and hearts.

(All) Let our hands be links of the Moana and Vanua which hold our lives together.

(L) Not a means of bondage and violence but a tested connectedness of strength.

All) An Oceania Laca of love and faith and community,
Giving us slack to sail the wind, yet holding us in a mystical embrace.

(L) That we may be alone, but never lonely, that we may be together, but never lost in the crowd, that we may be one without forfeiting uniqueness.

(All) We come joining hands one with another. With the hand of Christ in ours, we are a big family in God.

(L) Come together joining hands and hearts, and let the Spirit of God and the human spirit flow in each one and through us all, as we gather, wherever we are, to share this time and space, and as we walk together on the journey.

(All) We come joining hands and hearts. With our spirit quickened by the Spirit of God, we rally to worship God in sincerity and in spirit.

Amen.

[Lighting of the (4) Candles – 1 woman, 1 man, 1 youth, 1 child ...]] We light this candle in remembrance and in solidarity with every person who experienced violence and abuse in their life ...)



16 Days of Activism

HYMN: THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD

The right hand of God
is writing in our land,
writing with power and with love.
Our conflicts and our fears,
our triumphs and our tears
are recorded by the right hand of God.

The right hand of God is pointing in our land,
pointing the way we must go
So clouded is the way, so easily we stray
but we're guided by the right hand of God

The right hand of God is striking in our land,
striking out at envy, hate and greed.
Our selfishness and lust,
our pride and deeds unjust
are destroyed by the right hand of God.

The right hand of God
is lifting in our land, lifting the fallen one by one.
Each one is known by name,
and rescued now from shame,
by the lifting of the right hand of God.

The right hand of God is healing in our land,
healing broken bodies, minds and souls.
So wondrous is its touch,
with love that means so much,
when we're healed by the right hand of God.

The right hand of God is planting in our land,
planting seeds of freedom, hope and love.
In these Pacific lands, God's people all join hands,
and be one with the right hand of God.



LITANY OF VOICES

16 Days of
Activism

(All) Like the waves of the Moana breaking on the shores; like the wind whistling through the Vanua; like the lightning and thunder rolling across the Langi; and like the rain falling through the Qoana – so we sound out our voices from all corners of the Earth. Hear our cries, O God.

Woman's Voice 1:

We are bearers of the image and likeness of God. Our human dignity is in God who created us female and male in his/her image and likeness. Yet many times, we are treated as if we are less than human: our humanity diminishes in the structures and systems of patriarchy; our equality dissolves in the seas of culture-roles; and our dignity flows in the currents of misplaced and misunderstood faith. The Bible continues to be used as a tool for suppression than a means for empowerment and transformation.

(All) We cry out to you: bring justice.

Woman's Voice 2:

We are equally loved and redeemed by Jesus Christ. And still many of us live in prison-like situations and spaces in the home, church, community and society. The manifold violence, physical and sexual abuses, slandering and name-calling, and threats and fear-instilling words are daily realities for many. Many women and girls continue to be victims of violence, abuse and rape. All of this seem to be unchallenged and unchanged by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.

(All) We cry out to you: bring justice.

LITANY OF VOICES

16 Days of
Activism

Woman's Voice 3:

We equally share the breath of life by the same Spirit. Still, many of us neither live nor enjoy the quality of life that God desires for us – quarrels and fights, intimidations, wounds and bruises, and scars of hurt and suffering. It is as if the Spirit of Life is denied Her place in human relationships. Not the breath of life, but rather the breath of fear and pain and even death, so often fills our spaces and places.

(All) We cry out to you: bring justice.

Woman's Voice 4:

We are partners and co-workers in the Church and Body of Christ. Yet, in so many places, we are still far-off the mark in reaching equal leadership and equal participation in decision-making. We tend only in the assigned and confined spaces for women, girls and children. So often, our church worship services and programs target adults, and our youths and children are left out.

(All) We cry out to you: bring justice.





LITANY OF VOICES

16 Days of
Activism

Woman's Voice 5:

We are equal members of the community and society. Yet, we are still left out in the critical and important roles and decision-making processes in the community and society at large. Young girls still lag behind in accessing education. In many societies young and underage girls forced into prostitution and sex tourism, raped and sexually abused, and given away and forced to marry. Lesser number of women are in formal paid employment, and even if employed are often paid lesser than their male counterparts in the same or similar positions. In most societies, most women are still expected to stay home and carry out household work – work that is so crucial to family welfare, and yet is so often unacknowledged and unappreciated, and not assigned any monetary value.

(All) We cry out to you: bring justice

Man's Voice :

God of Grace, help us to acknowledge that all are created in Your image. Help us to teach men the errors of gender based violence and oppression. Comfort us and grant us holy strength when creating equality means giving up some of our power so others might fully participate. We confess that we have not always seen a world of equality as a world of your design. Renew us to work for equality. (WCC Pre-Assembly)

(All) We cry out to you: bring justice.

God of all humanity. Hear our laments and come to our aid. By your Spirit and loving kindness, make us channels of your justice. Amen.



PRAYER OF CONFESSION

16 Days of
Activism

(Let us read the one in bold together).

God of heaven and earth before you we confess our sin

(All) God of transformation hear our prayer

We confess the terrible physical and sexual violence that so many women/men/boys and girls across the globe are subjected to.

(All) God of transformation hear our prayer

We confess how even into our own time scripture has been used to justify Violence against Women and their exclusion from a full role in society.

(All) God of Transformation hear our prayer

We confess a violent culture which turns women's bodies into sexualised commodities and sees women as part of the spoils of war and commerce.

(All) God of Transformation hear our prayer

We confess the structural violence of our institutions including the church which too often exclude women from decision-making, power or authority.

(All) God of Transformation hear our prayer



PRAYER OF CONFESSION

16 Days of
Activism

Great God we give you thanks that you call us out of silence to name hidden and domestic violence

(All) Today we pray for all those women who despite suffering from violence, continue to care for family and children, to grow and prepare food, carry water, earn a living and offer support to others.

We pray for women who are trafficked as domestic or sex workers; for women who are raped and do not know how to find words to name their pain or a way into future.

(All) We pray for transformation of our societies which often find it easier to judge the victims of violence than to solve the problems of injustice.

We pray that women's voices may be heard and take into account in all peace and reconciliation work.

(All) We pray for a transformation in the violent way many men act towards and think about women.

We pray for right and just relations between and men that together we may transform and overcome violence in all forms and learn to celebrate our diversity and independence.

(All) We look forward to the age of peace, when violence is banished, both women and men are able to love and to be loved, and the work and the wealth of our world is justly shared. Amen

SCRIPTURE READING & REFLECTION

16 Days of
Activism



Credit: Samoa Observer

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

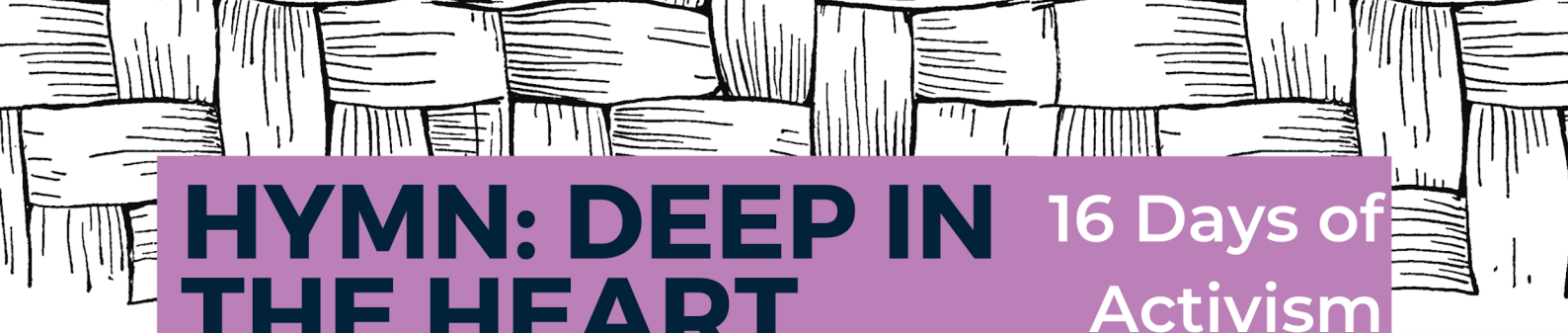
16 Days of
Activism

We believe in God
Creator who formed us in his/her image and likeness;
God who created us as equally female and male.
We believe in God the Redeemer
Logos who became flesh in Jesus of Nazareth,
Sophia who saves us from all inhumanities.
We believe in God the Spirit
Breathe who imparts life to both female and male,
Wind who enlivens and inspires us on life's journey.

We believe Violence against Women is a smear on the
Creator's image and likeness in the female and in humanity
A dishonouring of human dignity in the female being.
We believe Violence against Women denies the truth of Sophia
evidenced in Jesus of Nazareth
We believe that Violence against Women blurs the imperative
for equitable relationships.
We believe Violence against Women is an affront to the life-
giving Spirit, and a denial of the breath of life by the Spirit to
female human beings.

We believe in God – Creator, Sustainer and Protector.
We believe in Jesus Christ – Redeemer, Friend and Defender.
We believe in the Spirit – Life-Giver, Inspirer and Companion.
We believe in human relationships rooted in this vision of God.
We believe, together as women and men, girls and boys, we
can make the world a safer and better place for all God's
people.

Amen.



HYMN: DEEP IN THE HEART

16 Days of
Activism

WALLACE. L. WALLACE

Deep in the human heart
The fires of justice burn;
With visions of a world renewed
Through radical concern.
As Christians we are called
To set the captives free,
To overthrow the evil powers
And end hypocrisy.

This is our task today,
To build a world of peace;
A world of justice, freedom, truth,
Where kindness will increase;
A world from hunger freed,
A world where people share,
Where every person is of worth
And no-one lives in fear.

Taking the step of faith,
We leave the past behind
And move into the future's world
With open heart and mind.
By grace we work with Christ,
As one community,
To bring new hope and fuller life
To all humanity.



CLOSING PRAYER

16 Days of
Activism

Let us pray.

God of love, compassion and healing, we pray to you on this Breaking the Silence Sunday for the Elimination of Violence against Women:

(All) For women and girls who have experienced violent relationships, that they can find safety and healing from their trauma, and rebuild their lives;

For children who have witnessed violence in their homes against their mothers and sisters and other family members, that they will experience healing and hope;

For indigenous women and refugee women who have been impacted by extreme violence, that deep and lasting change will ensure their safety;

For individuals and organisations working to prevent violence against women and girls and help survivors of violence, that their courage and generosity will endure;

(All) For men who speak out against forms of expression that demean women or condone violence against them, that their voices will grow stronger;

For the men and boys who have behaved violently towards women and girls that they will have a change of heart, repent in meaningful ways, and seek whatever help they need to lead changed lives.

God of love, we commend these prayers to you and for your compassion to flood the hearts of all people. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit.

Amen

CONCLUSION

16 Days of Activism

Contributing to the attainment of safe, inclusive and violence free faith communities in the Pacific.

The project aims to prevent and respond to Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) as VAWG is a central barrier to gender equality and a cause of widespread violation of human rights across the Pacific. The Pacific Conference of Churches has come on board as a key strategic regional partner for UN Women under the Pacific Partnership Programme. This is a significant achievement as the PCC is a key influencer in the region as the only regional Faith organization representing all Christian faiths in the Pacific with 31 Member Churches (which is significant as 90% of the Pacific identifies as Christian) and 9 National Council of Churches.

This new project is part of the PCC's Strategic Plan (2020-2024), which recognized high rates of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and abuse in Christian homes and communities, and for the first time included clear outcomes for religious leaders and faith communities to urgently address high rates of VAWG in Pacific, using the power of faith and innovative collaborative approaches to address this issue. This remains a critical area of intervention considering the lack of a clear and coordinated regional and national response from faith leaders and faith based organizations to address VAWG; the high levels of religious practice and allegiance in the Pacific; and the widespread presence and respect for religious leaders means many women turn to their local Church community in times of difficulty or distress.

The Break the Silence Sunday campaign will build on already generated momentum from the previous campaigns and has huge potential to grow and progress towards a fully-fledged regional faith campaign across 14 countries to prevent VAWG. As it is an ambitious endeavour, the implementation of the regional Break the Silence Sunday Campaign will be a phased approach in the region, expanding to a few countries each year. It is envisaged that over time this campaign will be embedded and sustained within Member Churches in the Pacific.

Break the Silence Sunday was presented at the WCC 11th Pre-Assembly for the Just Communities for Women and Men and recommended to the WCC 11th General Assembly. There is a possibility that Break the Silence Sunday will be observe globally in the near future.



2023

PACIFIC CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES