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The Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia

Anglican Women's Studies Centre

Holy Trinity Mission District on Ha'apai

By Revd Evelini Langi



The Anglican Church on the island of Lifuka in the Ha'apai group of Tongan islands has seen better days and is now looking a little worse for wear after weathering many cyclones and earthquakes.

dom of Tonga the "Friendly Islands".

According to the last government census in 2011, the total population of Ha'apai was 60,125. Lifuka alone, was 2205, with more than 10 faith denominations including Anglican. It takes 45 minutes by plane or 12 hours by boat

"Praise the Lord All living creatures; Praise the Lord'. Ps 150:6

Where on Earth is Ha'apai? Ha'apai is one of the three main group of islands within the Kingdom of Tonga; Tongatapu the main island to the south, Vava'u and the two Niua's to the North, and Ha'apai right between Vava'u and Tongatapu.

Lifuka, the main island of the Ha'apai group of islands is where the Anglican Holy Trinity Mission District is situated. It was in Lifuka that Captain James Cook named the King-

to get to Ha'apai from the main island.

Since Ha'apai is dead flat Ha'apai experiences all the effects of climate change and rising sea level you could ever think of - Ha'apai has had them all! The highest mountain in the Kingdom, 'Kao' is in Ha'apai and right next to Kao is the volcanic island of Tofua, where the mutiny on the Bounty happened years ago and Captain Bligh and others were put out to open sea.

Choosing to Serve the Outer Islands:

After my ordination as Priest in 2012, I wanted to work somewhere in the outer



islands; either in Vava’u or Ha’apai. Two years later, I was one of six full-time Priests based in St. Paul’s Church in Nuku’alofa alone. Two male (S) and four female Priests (NS).

Considering my age at the time and that I would soon reach 70 years old, I told myself, “why not ask to serve in one of the outer islands as assistant to their existing Vicars”. I thought that two years would be just long enough for me to do my part well. So, after careful consideration and prayer, I approached the Archdeacon of Tonga at



The Holy Trinity Church with some of the damage suffered from the many natural disasters that have affected the island of Lifuka, Ha’apai Island Group, Tonga.

that time, the late Venerable Joe Le’ota, to seek permission from the Archbishop of Polynesia, Archbishop Winston about whether my idea was acceptable. Of course, it was accepted for me to serve in Ha’apai for two years, but with a concern as

I am non-stipendiary Priest. I was so excited at the time I never thought of the implications of that

in 2006 after 36 years and joined the Government redundancy programme as my elderly mother, Ketu Langi was slowly going downhill and I wanted to be with her, for out her seven children, I was the only one in Tonga with her. I made a right decision God looked after my mother for seven more years before she passed away in August 2013 after 88 long happy years. That was eight months after my ordination as a Priest. I definitely knew for sure she was really happy that I became a Priest while she was still alive. I continue to praise God for my mother’s life as well as mine.

I never knew that my request also coincided with Ha’apai Priest-in-Charge at that time Fr Fine Hoeft, with his family’s application for United States citizenship being approved and



they planned to migrate towards the end of that year, in November 2014. The late Ven. Joe Le’ota and I left for Ha’apai on the 19th November 2014. The service to mark the end of Fr. Fine’s work and the beginning of my service in Ha’apai was on Sunday, 23rd November 2014.

The Anglican Vicarage for Holy Trinity, Ha’apai

non-stipend thing. All I was asking was to allow me to serve His people in the island of Ha’apai or Vava’u for two years. I now knew that God provided for me all the way before I was even ordained.

I am a Government Pensioner, when I retired from Civil service

The Existing Anglican Church of Ha’apai

I recalled my very first step on the Anglican soil in Ha’apai. I looked around thinking Ha’apai seemed forgotten, but definitely not to God. A feeling of joy, though very different environment but I was happily greeted by all the congregation,



and the next door neighbours. Yes, I had left home and welcomed at home!

The Vicarage was a timber house, constructed in the 1970’s. It had two bedrooms, a living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom facilities and a store room.

The Church building consisted of three rows of pews on either side and an Altar, cross and candle stands, desks and chairs for the Lay Minister and the Priest plus two small tables. The walls, inside and out were cracked on all sides. The building had survived many natural disasters including cyclones and earthquakes but we managed to serve God in such a building

also be the only female Police Sargent Officer on the island. Her husband, also a Police Sargent officer, was my Warden. We held celebrated Holy Communion on Wednesday evening and Sunday morning and had Sunday School late Sunday afternoon.

A parish bank account existed but it only covered the mowing of the whole compound and sometimes the payment for church building electricity bills normally \$10 - \$12 per month. The bills to the vicarage, I took care of. We managed to open two more accounts, one for AAW/MU and one for the Sunday School and Youth ministry. The Sunday School project was funded by “The Least Coin”, meaning children would come to Sunday School with coins while happily singing loud our favourite chorus;

“Dropping, dropping, dropping, dropping,
Hear the pennies fall,
everyone for Jesus,
He can have them all.”

During my two years in Ha’apai, the congregation even managed to offer our share in support of the Diocese in 2015 (ToP\$1,500.00) and 2016 (ToP\$2,450.00).



Association of Anglican Women (AAW) and Mother’s Union (MU)

On the last Friday of the month, the women of AAW and Mother’s Union meet to pray, talk and listen to each other and display simple house hold items and Tongan cultural items for general display at the end of the year. The main idea is to raise the standard of living of families to a better one, and happily serve others in the community.

with high spirit appreciating God’s love to his people in Ha’apai.

The first few months of 2015 there were 10 Anglican families; five of those families originated in Ha’apai and five families on a working contract to the island. All up, the congregation consisted of 32 people including 10 women, 6 men and 16 children ranging from 2-16 years attending the Sunday School and Youth ministry.

I was the only Priest and the only lay Minister happened to

At the same time, we have a climate change project of:

- Raising compost heaps by using wastes and leaves
- Avoid burning of rubbish
- Grow home vegetables garden
- Plant fruit trees & traditional plants
- Plant floral gardens etc.

I also joined the village monthly inspections of all homes for cleanliness and the above-mentioned gardens.



The Church with the new water tank donated after Cyclone Ian

In early January 2014, Cyclone Ian, a Level 5 tropical cyclone hit the Ha’apai group. The Tongatapu Parishes sent food and drink, clothes, root crops, washing powder, soap and many other things, even monetary assistance to the church in Ha’apai. The local Government and other denominations also distributed cyclone relief likewise which was continued even to when I left after two years. I would like to offer a big thank you also to the Pre-School at St John’s Church in Te Puke. They send NZ\$2,000 through Ven. Joe and Anne Le’ota, which was very gratefully received. Ha’apai church received ToP\$3,500.00 Malo Aupito (*thank you very much*).

Apart from my involvement in many development activities and workshops in Ha’apai, the Anglican Church is also a member of the Ha’apai Church Leader’s Council. This ecumenical Council aim is to work together as churches of Ha’apai, without bothering or interfering on any church’s constitutional faith, whatsoever. The council works closely with Tonga’s Government Ministry of Internal Affairs, in funding the environmental project of planting sandalwood plants in all church compounds in Lifuka.

In collaboration with the Tonga National Council of Churches, a natural disaster relief committee funded by the people of America, and the ACT of Peace in Australia, the Anglican Church Ha’apai was given a 5000 L water tank. The congrega-

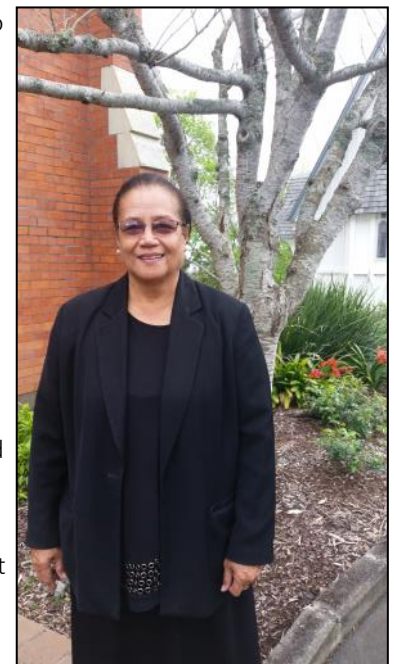
tion, neighbours and people who need a drink of fresh clean water are fortunate to share the living water of God.

I was very fortunate to spend these two years of my life with the people of Ha’apai, let alone the Anglican community. Participating and sharing the Gospel with the smallest Anglican congregation ever, I felt as if I worked with many people! Whenever I was alone in church or sometimes joined by one or two children, I faithfully delivered the message as if the pews were full of angels.

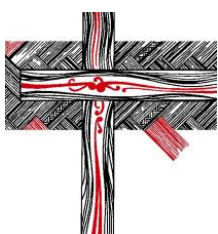
During my first year in Ha’apai, I told the Archbishop of Polynesia that I hoped I would be the last Priest to live in the current vicarage and that the rebuilding of church buildings be considered. This was only a wish but in 2016 Ha’apai parish was told by the Diocese that

they would build the church with the vicarage first. It has been ten months since I completed my two years in Ha’apai and I still believe and hope for the best and that the construction of Ha’apai Holy Trinity will still be on as we were told.

Finally, in a heart full of gratitude for Jesus’ grace to me that I wanted to serve in Ha’apai for two years. Those wonderful years, day by day I felt close to God. I thank the rest of my fellow AWSC Councillors and the AWSC Administrator, Karena de Pont for bearing me with this report. I joined AWSC as tikanga Polynesia Co-Councillor while I served in Ha’apai and that was my blessing. May Christ be known in our lives and what we do God bless us all.



*Revd Evelini Langi
AWSC Co-Councillor for tikanga Polynesia*



MAKE SURE YOUR PARISH CELEBRATES

*The 40th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women in
The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia
Sunday, 3rd December 2017*



Be Bold for Change

By Revd Tai Tuatagaloa

On 28th August, Revd Tai Tuatagaloa from St Faith's Anglican Church in Apia, Samoa was invited to lead the opening prayer for the Validation Workshop in Women in Politics: Joint Project Development. This event held at the Taumeasina Resort was sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women and followed an earlier phase of the project, titled the Increasing Political Participation of Women in Samoa (IPPWS). The success of Phase One saw a 300% increase in the number of female candidates in the 2016 Samoan Elections, unfortunately, the need for a 10% quota requirement of women representation is still a challenging ideal.

“Seek your joy in the Lord and He will grant you the desires of your Heart”
Ps 37:4.

We should be encouraged by this verse, for the task at hand whilst keeping in mind the theme of the International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8th, 2017.

This year “Be bold for change” was the IWD theme. That very day, The Archdeacons and leaders of our Anglican Church in Polynesia were summoned to meet together in Suva with all the Presidents of the various women's groups and key support personnel to affirm God's call to women and men in Church leadership to be bold for change. We were told that much is happening in the world that keeps pushing the gender balance agenda away from receiving its due attention. The World Economic Forum we were told, predicts the gender gap won't close entirely until 2186. That is a very long wait. And so we are urgently re-

minded to be more responsible leaders in creating a more gender inclusive world. It was stressed that ‘Bold steps call for bold thinking, and bold commitments and bold actions’.

Bold thinking requires us to shift in our thinking **requiring** the boldness to have conversations, **talanoa** – boldness to listen and let others speak, boldness to speak the truth in love, to name instruments and structures of violence and inequity and patriarchal attitudes.

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia
Anglican Women's Studies Centre

*presents the 2017 Treasuring Women in Ministry Provincial Hui for
Lay & Ordained Anglican Women in Ministry*

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Bold actions include creating safe spaces and empowering those who come to these safe spaces **like this very event**, to share their pain and their hopeful visions. It means stepping up and stepping out of comfort zones to accompany others in their quest, to protect those still in vulnerable unequal relationships in society, in work, in the community, in church or in the home.

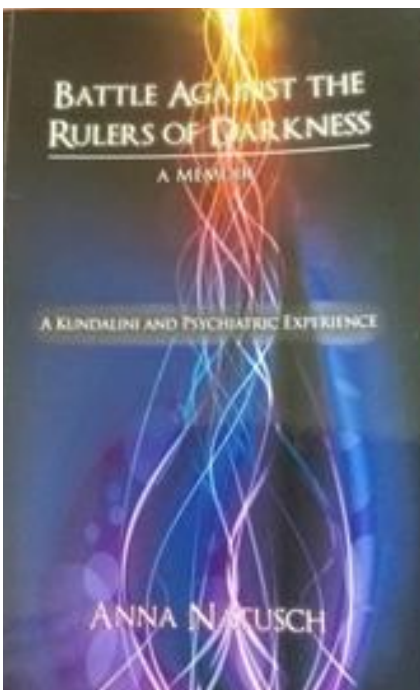
One of our main exercises during our meeting was to rethink some of the inconvenient texts in the Bible. A very convenient text for our task today, is Ps 37:4. So, if the desire of our hearts is being **“Bold for Change”** then we must seek our joy in the Lord and He will duly grant us the desire of our heart to be bold for change.

Let us pray: A NZ Prayer Book page 71:
Holy and ever living God, by your power we are created and by your love we are redeemed; guide and strengthen us by Spirit, that we may give ourselves to your service and live this



The Women in Politics Validation Consultation was held at the Taumeasina Resort conference centre and included some of the most influential women in Samoa. Revd Tai Tuatagaloa who has a fond love of glorious hats is front row, third from left. Photo credit: UNDP/N.Vaa/2017

day in love to one another and to you through Jesus Christ our Saviour – May you all deliberation be in peace, the wisdom of the wonderful counsellor guides you, the strength of the Almighty God protects you, the love of our ever loving Father enfolds you and the Peace of the Prince of Peace be with you; and the Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever, Amen.



Book Review: **“Battle Against the Darkness”**

By Revd Rosemary Carey

This memoir by Anna Natusch is a brave personal testimony from a woman who was a teacher in the Lake Alice psychiatric hospital and then a patient, that is credible and soul shattering.

The book is a powerful justice commentary, in which Anna points the way to hope and redemption. It offers another way to peace and restoration for the mentally unwell, instead of a forced programme of drug taking and electroshock treatment.

It is the story of a fighter who chose to tell her story instead of keeping silent and reveals how she managed to hold onto her sanity as she came to grips with seemingly hopeless situations.

Anna has bravely spoken out about a system that needs reform in her compelling story of one who is still coping with the residues of drugs in her body that are not willing to let her go.

Because of her experiences and her desire to help others, a trust has been formed called the New Zealand Hermitage Charitable Trust, to offer an alternative loving approach, to healing those who suffer mental health problems.

Copies of her book can be obtained through St Luke’s Church, Havelock North by phoning (06) 877-7366 or emailing officestlukeshn@waiapu.com ISBN: 978-09941413-0-9



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The Centre for Anglican Women's Studies, commonly known as the Anglican Women's Studies Centre was set up to serve and to advance the interests and needs of the women of this Church particularly those undertaking Theological training.

The Link Representatives from each Diocese and Hui Amorangi have been chosen for their leadership ability to identify, gather, facilitate, resource and encourage women in their educational preparation for ministry whether lay or ordained. It is hoped that the Anglican Women's Studies Centre can continue to enjoy the support of each Diocese and Hui Amorangi in this endeavour.

The issue of increasing numbers of women in representative positions across the councils and committees of the Church is seen as a high priority and the practice of intentional mentoring by those already in national and international representative roles is seen as a good way to expose women of this Church to fulfil their potential as leaders.

Ensuring that women's voices and stories are heard now and in the future is also one of our continued aims whether it be by traditional methods of publication or using more contemporary technologies like web publication. We remain optimistic that through continued support, the needs of women throughout this Province will be valued and recognized.

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EDITORIAL DISCLAIMER: The Anglican Women's Studies Centre is committed to encouraging and enabling women's voices and perspectives from across the diversity of the Church to be shared more widely. We acknowledge that women's experiences of church differ considerably and that resultant theological perspectives also differ considerably. In general, the AWSC does not exercise editorial control, rather we welcome as many voices as are willing to contribute.