

Hopes shared in Tonga, where dawn starts first



Photo: Olav Fykse Tveit/WCC

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“You are the first. You are the first among all the member churches of the World Council of Churches around the world to greet the dawn of every new day and to praise God,” said World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit in a sermon delivered 6 August at the Centenary Chapel of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga in Nuku’alofa.

During a visit to the archipelago in the South Pacific Ocean, Tveit preached at two services in the chapel. “Both were feasts of worship, with singing I will never forget,” he said.

Rev. Lopeti Taufu, former WCC president for the Pacific and a former member of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, presided over the Sunday service, while the current WCC president for the Pacific, Rev. Dr Mele’ana Puluka, translated.

“We are not called to be the agents of apocalyptic scenarios, to nurture fear, or to promote fatalism,” said Tveit. “We are called to be the agents of faith that expresses itself in accounts of hope.”

We can become participants and active pilgrims who are agents of change towards justice and peace wherever we are and whoever we are, added Tveit. “The hope we share gives us courage to start every day as a chance to be a sign of hope for others.”

The people of Tonga have helped us see that we live in a time when God’s creation is suffering, continued Tveit. “You alerted us decades ago, and now the whole world experiences climate change and its severe effects,” he said. “I have seen in your island where the sea has permeated into the land and made it uninhabitable in some places.”

Tveit also said one of the strongest signs of hope he has seen in Tonga is the young people in Tonga’s churches committing themselves to exploring how they can work together locally and in their region for justice and peace. He visited with young people during an event led by Cardinal Soane Patita Paini Mafi.

Tveit also met with Tongan prime minister Samiuela 'Akilisi Pohiva, as well as the president of the Protestant Church Rev. Taaroanui Marea, and thanked many in Tonga for their hospitality.

[Read the sermon by the WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit](#)

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