

EDITORIAL



The Journal of Contemporary Pasifika Theologies

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Bula Vinaka! Malo soifua! Welcome to the first issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Pasifika Theologies* (CPT). Based at the Pasifika Communities University, this new open-access peer-reviewed journal aims to provide a unique platform for Pasifika-grown thoughts. It publishes research articles, book reviews, and other contributions to theological talanoa from and about Pasifika. The journal is ecumenical, relationality-focused and rooted in a communities-based ‘whole of life’ vision. It urges us to tell our story as we see fit and encourages communities-based research methodologies that centre ‘life for the whole’ rather than ‘life for the one’.

The journal responds to the urgent need to upgrade and restore Pasifika theologies in the light of the contemporary, to critically articulate our faith and assist the churches to seriously respond to the pressing societal and ecological issues and multiple crises. CPT publishes decolonial, innovative, and prophetic theological voices for rethinking Pasifika history, bible, theology, ecumenism, interfaith, mission, and even culture; transforming the present and shaping the future in the light of life-affirming values.

The establishment of CPT coincides with the 60th anniversary of the Pacific Theological College and its transition to the Pasifika Communities University. Founded in 1961 and established in 1965, the Pacific Theological College is the oldest degree-granting regional educational institution celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. It has, across decades, been a home for prophetic voices that addressed the challenges of the region with a dedication to decolonisation, contextualisation, and justice. CPT continues this mission of serving the Pasifika household of God by offering a unique platform where Pasifika theologians can read and publish on matters of theological concern that are relevant to the region.

This first issue celebrates the legacy of the Pacific Theological College, now Pasifika Communities University, by bringing together a range of contributions from scholars who are closely connected to our institution and its ‘whole of life’ philosophy.

Afereti Uili in ‘Engaging Hebrew Wisdom from a Pasifika Indigenous Perspective: A Reading of Proverbs 27:19’ brings Pasifika wisdom into conversation with biblical wisdom as part of a broader re-weaving of the biblical mat. He shows how the intentional ambiguity of Proverbs 27:19 can be understood in a life-affirming manner through the ‘whole of life’ approach of Samoan indigenous wisdom.

‘Ecumenical Unity and the Necessary Contribution of Pasifika Hermeneutics’ by **John G. Flett** challenges the way in which contemporary ecumenical discourse seeks to eliminate difference. Flett acknowledges the leadership of Pasifika thought as he seeks to develop a de-Empired account of mission that recognises the flexibility of the gospel and makes plurality fundamental to Christian unity.

P. Zubeno Kithan in ‘Healing Together: Indigenous Naga and Pasifika Pathways’ challenges the limited and Eurocentric concept of empathy that is found, for example, in the aid work of humanitarian agencies. She calls for more holistic healing frameworks that recognise relationality and mutual responsibility, such as those found in Naga and Pasifika communities.

At this time of global environmental crises, **Carlos Caldas** from Brazil initiates a dialogue between the Andean philosophy of *Buen Vivir*—‘well living’—and Moana theology. In ‘Pachamama meets Moana: A South-South Dialogue on Eco-Theology and Well-Living from the Perspective of Public Theology’, he grounds this dialogue in a commitment to faith, hope, and love as virtues that can resist the capitalist reduction of the value of human life to consumerism.

Nikotemo Sopepa in ‘Au: A Pasifika Undertow Theology of Diplomacy’ draws on the image of the undertow current (*au*) to envisage a Pasifika theology of diplomacy. Diplomacy, like the current, can be a defiant movement that reshapes situations. Calling for a disruption of the mind, he appeals to the people of Pasifika to practice fluidity in thinking, which includes negotiating but also being prepared to walk away when the situation demands it.

In ‘The *Vosa Mana* of the *Vanua*: Reading Matthew’s Gospel in the Highlands’, **Brian Philip Dunn** takes the Pasifika approach to the *vanua* to Matthew’s Gospel. He shows how our understanding of the biblical text can be enriched if we listen to the voice of the land that connects the place and the people across generations.

Stephen Burns in ‘Christ, Calendar and Lectionary’ discusses the proposal that has recently been made by elite ecumenical bodies for a new ‘Feast of the Creation of the Cosmos’. Referencing the bias of the calendar and lectionary, he shows how this proposal continues a long history of ignoring Oceanic perspectives, and puts forward voices of wisdom from the region that should be listened to in the conversations about developing such a feast.

Faafetai Aiava in ‘Navigating Academic Privilege: Theological Insights for Pasifika Communities’ takes an honest look at the privileges enjoyed by academics. He calls indigenous intellectuals to redefine their privilege as relational and interspatial responsibility that should serve communities. Reflecting theologically, he shows how ‘not knowing everything’ is both human and an opportunity to engage the imagination.

In 'Reclaiming Inclusive Indigenous Voice Through Storytelling', **Bendanglemla Longkumer** argues that in the colonial system, indigenous stories have often either been dismissed or misappropriated. She calls for indigenous people to reconnect with their storytelling traditions, as stories can play an important role in achieving epistemic self-determination.

Melanie Barbato in 'Rethinking Metaphors for Interreligious Dialogue: From Boundary Crossing to Negotiated Space (*Vā*)' questions the spatial language that is typically used to describe the processes of interreligious encounter. Rather than a language of boundary-crossing, she suggests the Pasifika concept of relational or negotiated space (*vā*) as a metaphor for understanding interreligious dialogue processes.

The issue also features a book review by **Tamasailau Suaalii-Sauni** of *The 'Whole of Life' Way: Unburying Vakatabu Philosophies and Theologies for Pasifika Development* (2024), edited by Upolu Lumā Vaai and Aisake Casimira.

I hope that these insightful contributions on diverse yet interconnected topics will inspire a new theological 'whole of life' consciousness. This journal, I believe, will stimulate talanoa and titillate the minds of many generations, today and tomorrow, to become revolutionary members of the Pacific ecological Aiga!

Upolu Lumā Vaai
Editor

