

TALANOA TOKTOK

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Freedom at all costs scene from a film about the independence struggle on Kanaky

Death on Ouvea 35 years on, massacre scar remains

THE Pacific Conference of Churches will hold its General Assembly in Kanaky (New Caledonia) in November.

It will be 35 years since the massacre of Kanaky freedom fighters on Ouvea in 1988.

The members of the Kanak and Socialist Liberation Front (FLNKS) seized 27 French policemen and held them hostage in a cave.

Around 70 French commandoes were flown to the island and mounted an assault on the cave, freeing the hostages.

In the battle, two French commandoes were killed and one was wounded.

Of the 19 hostage-takers, four are believed to have been executed after the battle.

This has been denied by French authorities despite evidence at

Tan autopsy which showed that three men had been shot in the head.

A month later, in June 1988, FLNKS leader, Jean-Marie Tjibaou and pro-French politician, Jacques Lafleur, signed the Matignon Accord.

This paved the way for Kanaky to take part in a referendum on independence from France.

Leaders united on Nukes



Island time ... Pacific church leaders on Ejit Atoll in the Marshall Islands

Marshalls youth convict elders

IN the Marshall Islands, young people are taking the lead in the fight for nuclear justice.

Just under 70 years since the United States conducted Operation Castle Bravo on Bikini Atoll in the Marshalls, the nation's youth have started to fight back.

In May, they addressed leaders of the Pacific churches who gathered at Majuro to discuss the nuclear issue.

They heard heart-wrenching stories of continued experiments and data gathering by the US on the Marshallese people.

Leaders were moved to tears as young Marshallese told of their struggle for justice more than six decades after the nuclear tests.

Stark images of deformed babies born to victims of nuclear radiation shocked the leaders who represented churches from around the region.

On Ejit Atoll, across the lagoon from the Marshallese capital, Majuro, displaced Bikini islanders told their stories of injustice.

The US has refused to pay further compensation to the islanders, despite evidence that the cost of physical and mental health issues faced by them far exceeds any previous payments.

"We live in our own country but this is not our land," a member of the Ejit congregation told leaders.



"We may never be able to return to our real home - Bikini Atoll.

"Our elders thought they were being relocated temporarily but we have generations now who have never set foot on their home soli."

When the US relocated the Bikini islanders in 1946, the locals were told that their return would be allowed once tests had been completed.

There was an initial attempt at a return in the 1960s but this was reversed after islanders fell ill.

Today the atoll remains uninhabitable due to the amount of nuclear fallout and radiation.

The visit to Ejit and testimony of the youth convinced church leaders to agree on a statement on nuclear non-proliferation and a call for Japan to stop its efforts to pour waste water from its Fukushima nuclear reactor into the Pacific Ocean.

Churches talk aid

AUSTRALIA remains one of the largest donors in the Pacific with its assistance helping churches implement development programmes.

Pacific church leaders meet at least twice a year through funding from Australia.

Their talks have centred in recent years on migrant labour, threats from nuclear waste, modern day slavery and the protection of women.

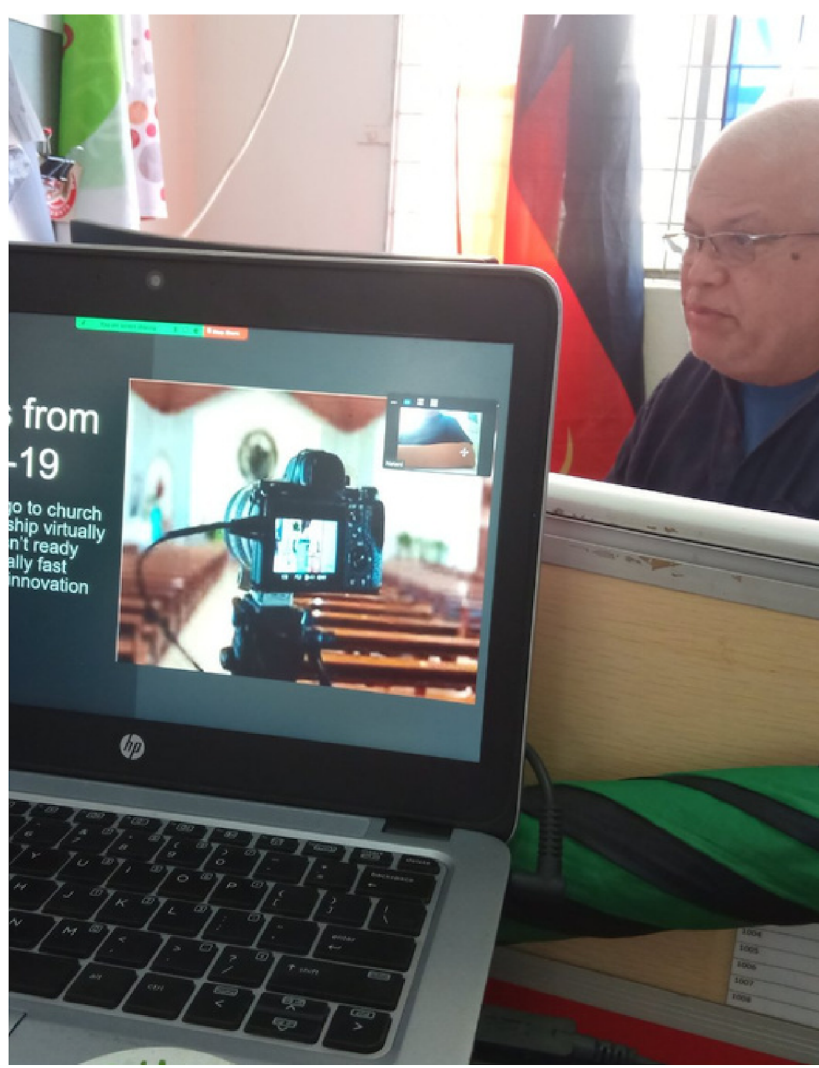


Australian development funding has also provided the Pacific Conference of Churches with consultants to conduct an organisational review. The review will help streamline the PCC operations and identify areas in need of capacity

development or improvement in the next financial year. In Quarter 1 of 2023, senior church leaders met in Tonga to discuss ways in which to cooperate with Australia on areas of critical need within the region. Churches in Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea receive assistance from Australia directly or through third-party Australian organisations.

Walk the talk

CHURCHES in Tuvalu, Fiji, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea have gathered on line to discuss communications policies. And, with the Pacific Conference of Churches, they have designed proposals to improve their communications strategies. This is the first of two communications workshops planned for 2023. The workshop will focus on development and digital justice in a rapidly changing Pacific with emphasis on the young.



Digitally speaking ... the PCC regional communications workshop