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Korowai of Hope

Celebrating Women's Ministry Across the Three Tikanga on Aotearoa Sunday

By Revd Jenny Quince



Photo: Ukarau Kakepare

From left: Reverends Amy Chambers (tikanga Polynesia), Vicki Sykes and Denise Kelsall (tikanga Pakeha) and Jenny Quince (tikanga Maori, HHN). Reverends Amy, Denise and Jenny concelebrated the service and Vicki preached.

On Aotearoa Sunday, 20th November 2016 the Hostel of the Holy Name Trust (HHN) hosted for the second time a celebration of women's ministry at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Auckland. The first time the Hostel of the Holy Name Trust co-hosted with tikanga Pakeha back in 2014 at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Parnell, Auckland, whereas this event was hosted in conjunction with tikanga Maori. This celebration came about because the Hostel of the Holy Name

Trust wanted to recognize the contribution of all our Sisters in Christ across the three tikanga. We invited all Anglican women and their various group connections to come and celebrate with us, e.g. Anglican Trust for women and children, Mother's Union (MU), Kahui Wahine, Anglican Association of Women (AAW) and Rangatahi / youth. We also invited Fijian, Tongan and Maori Choirs to sing and were pleased to have Paul Chan the Anglican Cathedral Organ Scholar eager

to participate.

The service was shared by twelve women from the three tikanga. Mrs Ope Maxwell welcomed everyone to our service while Liturgist Revd Jacynthia Murphy led us in our praise and worship. Mrs Barbara Dixon Auckland Diocesan President Association of Anglican Women (AAW) read the Lesson from Exodus 1:8-20 and Revd Sela Havili Kivalu read The Magnificat. Revd Iritana Hankins Mother's Union (MU) Provincial President New Zealand and Polynesia read the Epistle from Philippians 4:1-9.

Mrs Lynnore Pikaahu, President Kahui Wahine Tai Tokerau read the Gospel from Luke 18:1-5. Revd Vicki Sykes shared her Gospel thoughts emphasising the need to show courage and persistence as we work for a just world. Three young women, Miss Pia Davis from Tikanga Maori, Miss Emily Griffiths from Tikanga Pakeha and Miss Temukisa Amituan'i from Tikanga Pasifika were the Intercessors, and three concelebrants Reverends Amy Chambers, Denise Kelsall and Jenny Quince again representing the three tikanga.

We processed in with Showers of Blessings, the Cross of Jerusalem and our banners held high. The Tongan Youth Choir 'ofa ki he Laumalie Ma'oni'oni mesmerised those present with their strong voices lifted in praise to God. Then along came the Auck-

land Maori Anglican Choir, followed by the Fijian Lotu Vakaviti Anglican Worship Community Choir their beautiful voices also resonating throughout the church. And to top it all off the Cathedral Organ Scholar Paul Chan aptly accompanied us singing "Come Celebrate the Women"'who brought the church to birth, whose faith was salt and leaven, the teacher, saints and mothers who lived and died unsung, kept safe the gospel story and taught it to the young, weaving the fabric of the future in peace and unity'. Our recessional hymn was also powerful in word construction. "We shall go out with hope and resurrection... and tell our stories boldly, give a voice to those who have not spoken, we will share our joy with those who are still weeping, we will leap and dance the resurrection story." There was much joy and excitement as the procession walked through the congregation following such rich worship. The community gathering later gave the varied groups chances to mix together.



Among her many interests and responsibilities, Revd Jenny Quince is a tikanga Maori member on the The Hostel of the Holy Name Advisory Group, the Tai Tokerau AWSC Link Representative and currently tikanga Maori Alternate Co-Council for AWSC

SERMON:

Celebrating Women's Ministry

By Revd Vicki Sykes

Exodus 1:8-20 Barbara Dixon, Auckland Diocesan President - Association of Anglican Women.

Phil. 4:1-9 Revd Iritana Hankins, Mother's Union Provincial President New Zealand and Polynesia.

Luke 18:1-5 Lynnore Pikaahu, Kahui Wahine o Te Tai Tokerau.

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa. Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Ni sa bula vinaka, Namaste, Kia orana, Taloha ni, Fakaalofa lahi atu, and warm greetings to you all. Thank you for the invitation to share with you today. It is wonderful to see so many friends and to meet new ones. For those who don't know me I grew up here in central Auckland. My forebears came to Aotearoa 150 years ago, mostly as economic migrants from

Britain, although my DNA says I am also descended from the Irish, the Spanish, the Greeks, and I have a smidge of European Jew in me. I have been ordained for 30 years, and have lived in Mangere for the last 26 years with my husband Peter and our family.

When I was first asked to preach today I wondered how I was going to weave together Aotearoa Sunday, Christ the King Sunday, Women's ministry, the Hostel of the Holy Name and at one point the farewell for the archbishop! Fortunately the wonderfully organic process that led to today's liturgy settled on the celebration of women's ministry on Aotearoa Sunday. As an aside I would encourage those of you who are historians, or who write liturgical resources, to dust your pens off and prepare some resources for Aotearoa Sunday. When I was looking

for background material I found out that back in 1980 Sir Kingi Ihaka proposed to General Synod that Aotearoa Sunday be added to the church's lectionary. It was intended to be a day for the church to pray for and remember the Bishopric of Aotearoa. Aside from a few collects, I could not find any resources for today on that theme. It is important that the whole church can remember the stories of our history, and resources for this Sunday will help that.

I've had several opportunities lately to reflect on women's ministries so today I'd like to offer some thoughts in conjunction with the readings we've just heard. What is women's ministry you might ask, and is it any different from men's ministry? Why are we singling ministry out on gender lines in the first place? And what is it about the ministry that women specifically might do, or choose to do, or can only do, or is it ministry to and for and with women?

Ministry itself is the task of all of us; it is our way of being in the world; the way we serve others, motivated by love and compassion and justice, and by God's love for us. We are all, female and male, called into ministry as Christians. It can be easy for us in our church where women can hold the same roles as men, to forget that life for many women is not very rosy. The irony is that when life is not good for women, it is not going to be good for men or children either, regardless of who holds the power.

I'll share one example of what I mean. For 17 years until last year I worked in the family violence field with men who were abusive towards their loved ones. Abuse is more than physical and includes any attempt to control someone against their will. The most recent term that police use is Family Harm which acknowledges the wide ripples caused by this issue. I won't spend time on details, but I know that you will know the effect of that. I know, because it is a rare family that is not touched by family violence. I also know that the nature of family violence is that it is usually kept hidden out of shame and fear, by both the

perpetrator and the victim.

While doing that work, I often talked about keeping the balance between compassion and accountability. We need to be compassionate towards the perpetrators of violence, because they are in pain. They are usually victims of violence themselves, and they often lack alternative strategies to behave differently. However compassion on its own is dangerous. Compassion on its own excuses bad behaviour, which is why accountability is needed. Regardless of how painful your life is you are never justified in abusing others. You are accountable for your behaviour.

What does this have to do with women's ministry?

**Women and children, by a huge majority,
are the victims of family violence,
both inside and outside the church.**

It is a key issue stopping people reaching their potential. And based on the crime figures which get reported publically, and the fact that so much goes unreported, we know that there is a huge, submerged iceberg of problems in all of the societies represented here today. It is closely linked with addictions and mental health issues and child abuse. But don't be fooled into believing the media – it is not a South Auckland only problem – it occurs across society. If our ministry is about sharing good news, and about serving our families and communities with love, what does this look like in practice? What does it mean in our own families and churches and workplaces? What would ministry look like if we factored these issues into our focus in a proactive way?

To help respond to this question let me draw your attention to Shiphrah and Puah. They were the Hebrew midwives from our first reading today. The reading is set in a time when the descendants of Joseph lived in Egypt; however the Egyptians had forgotten the story of how Joseph had helped them, and they



Vashti's Banquet
Voices from her feast

Essays to Mark the 25th Anniversary of the Ordination of the 1st Woman Diocesan Bishop in the Anglican Communion: The Rt Rev'd Penelope Ann Bansall Jamieson

Edited by Jerry Chalness and Eime Foubert

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Photo: Ukarau Kakepare

The various women's groups and their banners ready themselves to process into the service

were persecuting the Hebrews. The Pharaoh had instructed the midwives to kill any boy babies born to Hebrew women. When he heard that this wasn't happening, he summoned Shiphrah and Puah and demanded to know why. The midwives told him "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them."

Really? Think about it! How likely is it that the midwives never made it in time for any Hebrew births?! And even if they were always late, which midwives seldom are, they could still have carried out the Pharaoh's wishes. These women used their power and knowledge to outwit the Pharaoh. They were subversive in literally the most life giving of ways. They knew the Pharaoh's knowledge of birth and babies would have been slim, and they lied to him to preserve life.

On many levels this story is representative of many women's lives today. While I don't think this story sanctions deception in general, it does portray a situation where women were forced to be creative with the facts in order to save lives. This put their own lives in danger; imagine what the Pharaoh would have done to them if he had discovered the truth. They were willing to take that risk to preserve life.

Women as the bearers of life, in most societies are expected to have the primary focus on the wellbeing of children. This has changed dramatically in recent times, for the better, and most men take an active role in caring for their children to the benefit of everyone. This doesn't take away from the fact that it is women's bodies that grow and nurture babies. However when violence, addictions and mental health issues are layered on top of family life, it becomes really challenging to care well for children. Add poverty into the mix and we have a toxic soup that means it is very difficult for people to live life to their full potential. It also means that people may be creative with the truth, just as Puah and Shiphrah had to be, in order to survive. Understanding this means we can exercise compassion alongside accountability.

I know some of you are actively involved in the family violence field and I would encourage you to be like the widow in our reading from Luke today and be persistent in keeping this issue on our church and community and family agendas. This is not just something that happens outside the church. The widow continued to lobby the difficult judge for justice. Notice that in the reading the judge describes her as bothersome; and other versions use the word troublesome. This passage is often interpreted as an example for women to persist even if they are described negatively. I think it is on one level a description of how hard women often have to work to have their voices heard. I'd also like to introduce another possibility – that the woman is a metaphor for God. She continued to strive and plead and advocate for justice, in the face of negativity and opposition. Even though the judge clearly gave in to get rid of the widow,

her advocacy still achieved the justice she sought.

God also continues to call us to justice, even if we refuse to listen. However we choose to understand this passage, there is a clear challenge to us to persist in pursuit of what is right.

While not all of us will have a specific ministry focus on preventing family violence, all of us are called to practice compassion and accountability; to care for others where we find them.

We need to be aware of the challenges in people's lives, known and hidden, that prevent them from reaching their potential. We cannot turn a blind eye because it is hard or uncomfortable or scary. We need to be open and safe people for others to turn to. We need to offer personal support and as well as to advocate for change.

When women and children are safe in Aotearoa and the Pacific then we may not need to have such a specific focus on women's safety and women's ministry. Until then, we need to keep a focus on the gender issues. You may hear people say "but we need to look after men too, or women can also be violent to

wards men". Yes both of those statements are true. However we need to primarily focus on those whose lives are most disadvantaged, in order that everyone's lives will be better.

As a comparison, many of you will have heard of the "Black



PHOTO: Ukarau Kakepare

Revd Sela Havili Kivalu

Lives Matter" movement in the US, which stands in the tradition of social justice movements that campaign against violence and systemic racism toward black people. The statistics are clear in the US that people of colour are seriously disadvantaged by every social and economic indicator. However this makes some



PHOTO: Ukarau Kakepare

'The Angies' from the Auckland Maori Anglican Club sing a himene

people uncomfortable, guilty, or angry and there has been a counter slogan recently of "All Lives Matter". Of course all lives do matter, but the point of the Black Lives Matter movement is that we need to focus on those who are missing out the most, and address that.

Here in New Zealand we have similar issues although Pakeha New Zealand particularly uses a number of mechanisms to de-

flect the focus from our terrible indicators of violence, poverty, health, prison population and educational achievement. We have a tendency to blame the victim, and to say directly or imply that if people tried hard enough, spent their money wisely, stayed in school, they would be able to change these statistics. This is where we need our storytellers and our history; where times like Aotearoa Sunday are important opportunities to encourage all tikanga to remember the injustices perpetrated on Maori and Pacific peoples. We – not just tikanga Maori, or tikanga Pasifika – but also tikanga Pakeha need to understand and share the stories of our respective experiences.

Going back to the example of family violence, whether we attribute this to colonisation, or neo-liberal economic agendas, or individual choice – all of which I think play a part –

we still need to have compassion for those who suffer, as well as expecting accountability – of all of us – for abusive behaviour that is personal and abusive behaviour that is structural.

Women's ministry is often focussed on women and children, sometimes by intention, and sometimes because that has been the only acceptable place for women to minister and work. Nevertheless, over the generations that has led women to be involved in movements for the vote, for healthcare, child-care, and family violence prevention. Many of you here today have been involved in Mothers' Union, AAW, Youth groups, trade unions, professional associations, preschool committees, and school committees. All of those are focussed on making the world a better place, and on ensuring fair access to resources for all.

My challenge and encouragement for all of us today, and particularly for the work we do as women, is to keep it real. Listen to and learn our histories so we understand how we got to this place. Sit with the discomfort of stories that may be different from what we have known. Pay attention to what is actually going on in people's lives. Ask the question "who is missing out here?"

Be creative, and subversive, and bothersome with and on behalf of women, because the world will be a better place for everyone when it is a better place for women.

How do we sustain ourselves as we exercise this kind of ministry alongside those who are hurting and disadvantaged and discriminated against? How do we maintain hope in the midst of human pain?

I found some helpful words from Rev. Dr Rebecca Dudley. Rebecca is an International Human Rights expert currently working

for the New Zealand Red Cross. She said:

"If you find hope easy, you have not been paying attention. You have not sat with someone long enough. You haven't listened closely enough. You have not cried hard enough. You have not been angry enough at injustice. If you start with the right question and you face it squarely, you will hear and see some unbearable things. Here what I know for sure: Hope starts by looking steadily at reality. It goes straight through the middle of despair. Then it is pulled into God's will, for the world God loves so much. Hope is freely available. But it does not come cheap."

The reading from Philipians rounds this off helpfully for us. In the midst of conflict and worry and distress we are encouraged

to be gentle, to rejoice in God, to bring our concerns to God, and to focus on all that is good. No single individual can change the world: that is not our job. We are all called, women and men, to use our gifts wisely and minister where we can best bring God's love and justice.

And in the last words of the reading from Philipians:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Amen.

Break the Silence Sunday



"My daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

How many times have we longed to hear those words ourselves when we are going through pain or heartache or some trouble? Some words of comfort. Or at least some small indication that God cares and knows what we are going through? Our friends might say to us – don't worry about your problem. You just need to have some faith. We ourselves might say – I can't do this. I really can't. If only my faith was stronger. Or - I should pray more. May be the Lord will hear me then.

When we think about it, the focus is always – me, I, ourselves. We tend to blame ourselves. It's always about OUR faith or OUR lack of faith.

Reading: Luke 8: 40-56

House of Sarah, Suva, Fiji

What is this faith, this elusive positive value that we put such a price on, that seems to be the answer to all our problems? It's a positive attribute that we all like to have in abundance. The book of Hebrews says: "to have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see." We think that may be if we just have a little bit more faith:

- ▶ we will not be so sick
- ▶ we will do better in the exams.
- ▶ we will not have so many problems.

But we forget that the Bible says that you can have faith as small as a mustard seed and still move mountains. So it's not the size or depth of one's faith that's important. It's:

WHO do we have faith in?

WHO are you trusting and relying on?

WHO are you praying to?

In the last few months we in Fiji have been reading about the people who are going to Natadradave for this water that they believe has healing powers. Now that's a clear example of what people are having faith in!

The two people in the story from the gospel we heard this morning had no doubts about who they had faith in. Jarius and

the woman who was sick went to Jesus for new life and found it. There is a miraculous story of faith. But the story is not only about faith. At a deeper level Luke shares this story because it's an example of how Jesus highlighted the injustices and abusive structures that existed in society at that time.

Unfortunately that situation still exists today even here in Fiji! That's why churches in Fiji, and for our Diocese – also in Tonga, Samoa, American Samoa, New Zealand. Today we mark Break the Silence Sunday. Since 2013 we have been setting aside a Sunday to speak out against violence, abuse, injustice, discrimination - from the pulpits. To tell you, the people sitting in the pews, the members of the church, that we cannot be silent in the face of all the violence that is happening around us. Civil society organisations like the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre have been in the forefront speaking against violence. For a long time they were the lone voice crying out to the community to wake up and see the crime that is happening.

Where is the church in all this? The church has often been accused of being a gatekeeper. Of not saying to its members, to the community, that violence is wrong. It is not Godly. It is a sin. For also not saying to the countless women and children who are the victims, the survivors of violence, that we stand with you. We are here for you.

And to the perpetrators of violence – those who commit these acts, these crimes – what you are doing is wrong. If you are a Christian you are not showing by your actions that you are a follower of Christ. For Jesus is the God of love. And love and violence do not go hand in hand!

When Jesus said, ***“My daughter your faith has made you well. Go in peace”***, his words of love, compassion and understanding overturned the religious and cultural norms of that society that divided people into the privileged and the under-privileged; the powerful and the weak; the oppressor and the oppressed. When Jesus called this nameless woman, this woman who had been sick for years, “my daughter”, he restored what society had taken away from her: her identity, dignity and humanity.

Furthermore Luke also showed that Jesus offers a new way of relating to one another that brings hope, restoration and fullness of life. The original readers of Luke's gospel would have understood the implications of the story we've just heard because they knew the social setting. In order for us to understand the liberating power of Jesus' words and actions as described in this passage, I would like us first of all to look at the context. Notice that there are two main characters in the story, Jarius and his 12 year old daughter and the woman with the hemorrhage.

These people belonged to two different classes in society. Jarius

is a respected member of the synagogue. In fact he is one of the officials there. He is from a privileged and powerful class in society. Because he is an official in the synagogue he is in a position of authority. They make the rules; they control the way people behave towards one another and they give rewards and punishment to those who deserve them.

The woman with the severe bleeding – is part of the poor; the disadvantaged; the oppressed and the ostracized. She lives on the fringes of society. According to their religious tradition she would be considered “unclean” because of her hemorrhage. In fact she would be treated as an “outsider.” Everything she



touched would be considered unclean; even if her shadow fell on someone, that person would be “unclean” too. And so life for this woman would be lonely, isolated and depressing. Apart from the sickness that can't be cured – she had spent all her money going from one doctor to another but with no success. Her life would be miserable and full of pain.

Here are two contrasting situations. Jarius' daughter is about 12 years old and just entering womanhood but is dying. The woman, who we can assume is old, has been sick for years and would be more or less like the “walking dead.” Both have come to Jesus for healing, restoration - for life.

Because of the laws of their religion, Jarius can easily access Jesus' help whilst the woman, because of her condition and status, cannot. Because of Jarius' privileged position, he is able to go directly to Jesus, speak directly to him and ask him to come to his home to save his 12 year old daughter who is dying. The woman cannot approach Jesus directly. Her religion and her gender do not allow it. Instead she comes from behind him and only touches the hem of his garment believing that she would be healed. Try and picture that scene. There's a crowd around Jesus. She is pushing her way to him, risking her life. Her faith in Jesus as the Messiah has given her the courage to seek him, no matter how dangerous the situation she finds herself in. And as

we know from the reading, she was healed instantly when she touched the hem of Jesus garment. For Jarius, Jesus finally goes to his home and brings his daughter back to life.

Several interesting things are highlighted in this story:

Notice that Jesus is not contaminated by the woman's impurity. He actually acknowledges that someone touched him and that power flowed out from him. That power healed her brokenness and gave her the new life she was looking for. Notice the reverse in action that takes place. Instead of him becoming "unclean" something positive and dramatic happens to the "unclean" woman.

By this action Luke shows that Jesus destroys the power of religious beliefs that puts a lot of emphasis on the observance of laws, rules and regulations that dehumanizes people. In stating that the power had come from Jesus to heal this woman, he was demonstrating that healing, new life, does not come from human efforts but it comes from having faith in God, and believing in Jesus as the Saviour.

Notice that Jesus took the trouble to find out who had touched him. There was a crowd around him. When Jesus asked, Peter tried to dissuade Jesus by saying – how can you know? All these people are crowding you. Anyone of them could have touched you.

But Jesus insisted. He wanted to find out. And in doing so, he gives the woman the opportunity to come forward and tell her story. This is Jesus caring for some unknown person. Not just any unknown person. She's a woman and one with a bleeding disease. This is a no-no in their society. It's a cultural taboo, a disgrace and embarrassment.

But not to Jesus. No person is too far away or too insignificant for him. He reaches out to her in love. The woman who represents the poor, the oppressed, the disadvantaged – a person with so many obstacles in front of her is treated in the same way as a person from a privileged position. The same healing that he did for this woman he also did for Jarius daughter – a person from a privileged class.

By this action Jesus destroys the socially constructed barriers that try to keep her away from a fulfilled life. Jesus also demonstrates that whatever part of society one belongs to – whether one is rich or poor, male or female, Indian or i-Taukei, at Jesus

feet, all are equal.

Notice that Jesus calls this nameless woman – "my daughter". He immediately forms a link with her. Those words of compassion, of love, of grace – welcomes her into his family. He includes her. He breaks down that barrier that excluded her from society. He gives her a new identity. Makes her a valuable member of society. He restored what had been taken away from her by society - her wholeness. He not only heals her sickness but also her heart and she becomes a part of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus invitation is given to everyone. Some hear it but allow the worries of this world, the obstacles in their way - to prevent them from accepting the invitation. The woman in this story heard the invitation and risked her life in order to be healed. All the social and religious barriers were there to stop her. But for her it was worth the risk to be healed, to be part of the Kingdom of God.

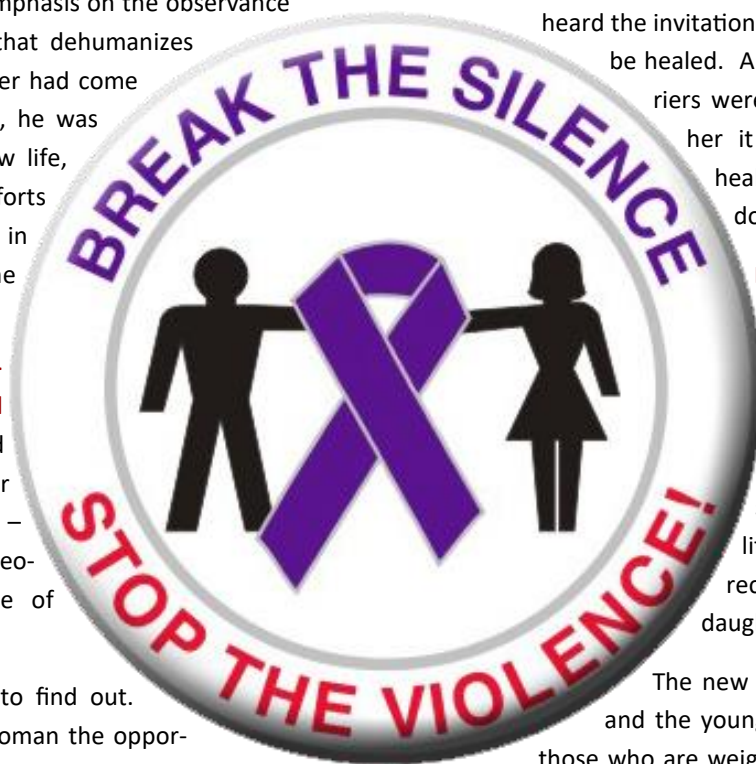
Notice that Jesus words are words of life and restoration and they are transformative. In telling her that she had been made well and to go in peace, Jesus was promising her a new life, an abundant life, a resurrected life with Christ. For Jarius daughter, she was restored to life.

The new life promised to this woman and the young girl is available not only to those who are weighted down with the burdens of this world, but as is demonstrated by Jarius daughter, even someone who is spiritually, emotionally, dead. The dead will be brought back to life through Jesus grace and mercy.

The secret to all this is to answer the question – who do you have faith in? Who are looking for? Who are you focusing on to help you? Jarius knew. The woman with the bleeding problem knew. Do you? Do you know who holds the key to life and everlasting life? Jesus is the key to life in all its fullness.

How might this passage speak to us today on this Sunday when we join the other Christian churches in marking Break the Silence Sunday?

To follow Christ, is to be His disciple. It is to show in the way you live your life every day, that you are living out Jesus message of love, forgiveness, and acceptance.



Jesus' love is inclusive. It includes everyone. Jesus does not discriminate against anyone. Whether one is rich, or poor, young or old, male or female, gay or straight, disabled or whole, prostitute or doctor, drug addict or a clean living person, Christian or non-Christian. Jesus' love extends to everyone. He loves you just as you are and accepts you as you are.

Unfortunately many of us, we who profess to be followers of Christ, tend to limit God's love. We exclude those who don't share our views, those who disagree with us, those who are different from us. Many of us go as far as to say – you are not welcome into the church because you are a sex worker or you haven't been born again or you are a divorcee or you are gay. By our actions, our attitudes we are unloving which is interpreted as violent, abusive and discriminatory.

The Bible is full of stories where Jesus ate with those who were considered sinners, e.g. Zacchaeus the tax collector, Mary Magdalene the prostitute. Jesus lived a life that challenged the religious barriers that were evil and destructive. This morning Luke's gospel reaffirms that the God we worship embraces everyone. Let us not limit God's love by our attitudes and prejudices. Reach out to those who society considers as being on the "fringes" of society. Speak out against violence, abuse, discrimination, corruption. It is our Christian duty to do this.

Jesus' love overcomes all barriers – barriers of race, creed, gender, social status, class. Barriers that divide people and separates, that dehumanizes. In calling her "daughter" he broke down all the barriers that cast her in the shadows that made her a non- valuable part of society. He acknowledged that she was someone: she was a child of the King of Kings; she belonged to the Kingdom of God. That would have been considered an extremely radical thing to do. But Jesus was challenging the abusive structures of society that separates people and treats them differently and unjustly.

Jesus stands up for those who are hurting, the downtrodden, those who are ostracized from society, those on the periphery – considered outsiders – because of whatever situation they are in. He not only speaks up for them but also acted. The sick woman is representative of the weak, the vulnerable, the voiceless in society, those who are discriminated against, those who are victims of violence, of abuse. Yet Jesus healed her and restored her to her rightful place in society.

Jesus says to the perpetrators of violence, to those who were doing violence – STOP. In the Kingdom of God there is no room for these beliefs, traditions, for these kinds of behaviour. Luke included these stories for a purpose. He wanted to show that Jesus does not condone violence. His actions said – NO – STOP - Violence and abuse has no room in the Kingdom of God.

I pause here to say to we, the church – if Jesus can stand up to

say to say to the perpetrators of violence in this story, to the powerful, the abusers – stop what you are doing. It is wrong. It is time for the church to also speak out against the injustices in society, violence in all its forms and especially gender-based violence. For too long the church has been silent and has been labelled as a gatekeeper: condoning violence and not calling the perpetrators of violence to account for their actions.

For too long the victims of gender-based violence, the survivors – some of whom are sitting in the pews of our churches – these women who are the backbone of our churches – have been waiting for the church to come alongside them and support them. Waiting to hear that the church is taking a stand and preaching about the evils of domestic violence. Waiting to hear that males and females are created equal in the eyes of God. Waiting to hear that when a husband beats his wife he has broken the vows of marriage to love and cherish.

The good news is: today marks a new beginning for the wider church. The Anglican Church has been in the forefront since 2013. But today we join the other members of the Fiji Council of Churches in saying – Violence in any form, and especially violence to women and children, is un- Godly. It is evil and a sin.

Break the Silence Sunday is the churches commitment to speak out against violence in our families, homes, community and society at large. It is the beginning of a concerted effort by the churches – to stand in solidarity with one another – with other Christian sisters and brothers – to make a difference in the lives of our worshipping communities. To bring about a safe church, safer homes and safe communities.

At an individual level today gives us another opportunity to re-examine how we are living out our Christian witness. To lay aside those things that are not right with God and those whom we interact with and reaffirm the values and qualities that are loving, supportive and life-giving.

Let us Pray

Loving God, you are the one who desires that all people be brought into right relationship with one another and with you. Show us the path to justice and peace in our families, our communities and our world and fill us with your transforming power. AMEN

House of Sarah **Building equal and respectful relationships**
within our families, our churches,
our schools and our communities.

Anglican Women's Studies Centre (AWSC)

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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 fulfill 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 website publication. We remain optimistic that through continued support, the needs of women throughout this Province will be valued and recognized.



Council for Anglican Women's Studies — 2016

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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.