

WOMEN IN MINISTRY (PACIFIC)

UPDATE: MAY 2022

Bula vinaka, or “greetings” in Fijian.

Thank you for your support of our Women in Ministry project. As you will read below, our determined and resilient scholars have hit the ground running in Semester One. This is the first time all our students have been undertaking post-graduate study. It is a testament to their determination and the support of their churches. We also have some wonderful news to share about past students’ success.

In this update, we have included video links with greetings from Rev Geraldine and 2021 graduate Asinate, as well as current student profiles. We encourage you to print these profiles and display them to remind you or your congregation of the women you are supporting. Your support, both financial and prayerful, is so important to the students, their churches and the team at UnitingWorld.

Thank you.

Mardi Lumsden and Tanya Lee Fenwick

2022 students at PTC

This year, we have three students (Rev Geraldine, Daphney and Rev Susana) who are part of the Women in Ministry Scholarship Program. All three are studying post-graduate degrees at Pacific Theological College (PTC) in Suva, Fiji. Their profiles are below. Please print these and display them somewhere to remind you to keep them in your prayers.

PTC is one of several colleges that are part of this project. It is the largest ecumenical theological college in the Pacific. Opening in 1965, PTC was the first educational institution, secular or religious, in the Pacific region to offer studies at degree level and award an internationally accepted degree. As part of their six-year Strategic Plan, PTC are currently transitioning to University status and hope to achieve this goal by 2024.

The College serves a diverse range of churches from 16 countries, training people from Anglican, Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian/Reformed, Uniting and Lutheran traditions.

To learn more about PTC and to watch a video on it’s past, present and future, visit the website <https://ptc.ac.fj/>

All going as planned, Rev Susana and Daphney will graduate at the end of this year. Rev Geraldine is expecting to graduate at the end of 2023.



Rev Susana in the PTC library. Photo courtesy of PTC



Student Spotlight: Rev Geraldine

Rev Geraldine is from the island of Rotuma, is an Ordained Minister in the Methodist Church in Fiji (MCIF) and mother of three. Rev Geraldine has worked in parishes, schools and as a lecturer at Davuilevu Theological College. She began her PhD in 2019 and is majoring in the Old Testament. She is expected to finish her PhD at the end of 2023.

At the time of her application, there were no women in the MCIF with a PhD and no MCIF ministers with a PhD qualification in Biblical Studies/Old Testament. This means that once Geraldine graduates, she will be the most qualified Minister/theologian in Biblical Studies in the MCIF.



Rev Geraldine. Photo supplied

She is passionate about challenging Biblical misinterpretations of gender equality and highlighting women and men as equals. Geraldine also contributed to UnitingWorld's [Theology of Disaster Resilience in a Changing Climate Bible Studies](#).

Visit UnitingWorld's Vimeo page [here](#) to see a short greeting from Rev Geraldine. We are also planning a Zoom "Talanoa" (conversation) with Geraldine and our WiM supporters for September. Stay tuned for more details.

What was exciting or interesting about your time at PTC last year?

Being part of the leadership and management workshop. Being part of the Curriculum designing workshop that involves the transition of PTC to a University level.

I was also involved in doing presentations on women's issues in the Pacific last year and was also involved in the Feminist Theologians Dialogue last week. It helps me a lot because in listening and dialoguing with them, I was able to help them in their struggles and at the same time give clarifications on some biblical texts that makes women feel inferior and mistreated. Completing the re-editing of the thesis and submission to Supervisor for checking.

What are your goals for this semester?

Facilitating workshops on leadership and management, gender equality and social justice in communities for leaders.

As a woman studying theology, who inspires you?

My sister: She is not a theologian but her experiences in building network with other fields such health, farming, business sector, aviation, community building has taught me that building network with people from different organisation is very important. She inspires me to love and care for the animals. She always reminds me that theory and practical goes together.

When you complete your degree, what do you hope to do?

I hope to teach in the community, if I am not sent to theological schools for teaching. My hope is to strengthen women in ecumenical and interfaith dialogues at the community level. My dream is to hold a leadership position within the church so it sets a pathway for more women coming into ministry.

Do you have a message for the Uniting Church in Australia?

I would like to thank UnitingWorld and Uniting Church for your kind support towards my family. We pray that God will continue to bless you all abundantly and keep you all safe.



Thesis topics and progress

All of the students are continuing work on their research theses. Below is a snapshot of what they are working on.

Daphney <i>Master of Theology, PTC</i>	<p>My topic is <i>“Wantok Ministry for Justice: A pastoral response towards women’s rights issues in Papua New Guinea for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG”</i>.</p> <p>I have completed my Introduction and chapter 1 and I am working on my chapters 2 and 3. In March I presented chapter 1 in our first department seminar for this semester. From my research it was interesting to come across “gender theology” which CPP and the churches in PNG are currently using. I think the challenges for me is that Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG does not have a good data collection of women’s issues in the church that I could use, therefore I am planning on interviewing individuals who are engaging on the ground to get insights on the kind of approaches to women’s rights issues they are using in order to analyse the data I have collected online from various institutions working with women’s rights issues in PNG.</p> <p>The research proposal is towards a re-examining of the meaning of human rights in the light of relational justice with a pastoral perspective for ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea.</p>
Susana <i>Master of Theology, PTC</i>	<p>My topic is about suffering and silence in the Fijian modern context. There are many suffering in our world today. Some are hidden and some are not. Fiji has undergone a transition period, whereby people suffer due to the changing of leadership. Through abuse of power in the government and the Vanua. People lives in fear and suffering. I used the book of Habakkuk to revisit a new meaning of suffering and silence in the Fijian context.</p>
Geraldine <i>PhD, PTC</i>	<p>I’m applying my tefui hermeneutic in reading Genesis 16 and 21 from an interfaith perspective. A tefui hermeneutic speaks of equality and how such understanding can help people to recognise and identify how they view each other despite their ethnicity, religion, age or gender. One of the interesting progress of the thesis is the realignment of the thesis and identifying the major areas that need more research.</p>

Past student news

Asinate graduated from Davuilevu Theological College (Fiji) at the end of 2021 with a Diploma in Theology majoring in Biblical Studies. She was awarded Dux of the College and received the Principal Prize for Academic Excellence after getting the highest points and grades in all course work.

She also received the Old Testament Prize, Overall Biblical Language Prize and the Ecumenism Prize. Congratulations Asinate!

She has been appointed as Lecturer at The Methodist Lay Training College (MLTC), a sister college of DTC. Prior to studying, Asinate was a professional lawyer who decided to resign to undergo ministerial studies at DTC.

Watch a greeting from Asinate [here](#) (filmed in late 2021).

Miriam completed a Bachelor of Theology at Rarongo in PNG in 2020. Miriam is now working on a Master of Theology at Rarongo with support from the Winifred Kiek Scholarship Trust (WKST).



Prayer Requests

Daphney <i>Master of Theology, PTC</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the continued struggles of rights and freedom in West Papua• For the Kanaky people and their struggles for freedom• For all countries who are at war, for the innocent man, women and children suffering• For my mother who has been diagnosed with kidney failure and is awaiting dialysis
Susana <i>Master of Theology, PTC</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pray for my studies and thesis writing• Pray for my family
Geraldine <i>PhD, PTC</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please pray for my studies and family• Please pray for people to be kind to animals

As always, please feel free to send any prayers or an 'update' of your own for us to pass along to the scholars. Our students value their sisters and brothers walking alongside them in this journey.

Thank you once again for your partnership in this life-giving mission!

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