

‘Rising hope during rising tides’: the presentation of a peace candle during the Ecumenical Youth Concert, Suva, Fiji

Having marched to the accompaniment of the Salvation Army band through the main streets of Suva on a hot, sunny Easter Sunday afternoon, young people from a dozen different denominations gathered at Ratu Sukuna Park for Fiji’s fourth annual Ecumenical Youth Concert.



*Some of the youth (and not so youthful)
on the march to Ratu Sukuna Park
Photo: Revd. James Bhagwan*

Organised jointly by the Fiji Council of Churches (FCC) and the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECCREA), the theme of this year’s concert was ‘Resurrection: Rising hopes during rising tides’. Revd. James Bhagwan gave the opening key address on climate change: “People need to make peace not only with God and one another, but there is also a need to be at peace with our planet, our common home and the environment”.

It was during the initial welcome that mission partner, Julia Edwards was called up to the stage to present a peace candle to the Vice President of the Fiji Council of Churches, Major Uruaia Dravikula of the Salvation Army. The candle was a gift from the Stirling Methodist Church, given in solidarity with the people of Fiji and the Pacific, in response to the impacts of climate change in the region and the considerable suffering that Severe Tropical Cyclone Winston had caused in February 2016.



*Vice President of Fiji Council of Churches, Major Uruaia Dravikula accepting the peace candle.
Photo: Left – Revd. Val Ogden; Right – Fiji Sun*

Julia offered the candle on behalf of Stirling Methodist Church, the Methodist Church in Britain and concerned people in the UK. “We are all one: one people, one planet, one in unity and one in hope”. And with those words she handed over the candle.

The concert continued with creative arts and contemporary dance performances, and the singing of traditional hymns of celebration. And each act was eagerly applauded by the audience, who were scattered (fittingly) to the shade of giant rain trees.



Supernumerary minister, Rev. Walter Attwood of Stirling Methodist Church, who had presented Julia with the peace candle on a cold, dark evening in February and asked her to take the candle back with her to Fiji, said: “When you go back to Fiji take this candle to your church, light it and pray for peace, not just peace among people but peace with the planet, peace with plants, peace with animals, birds and fish, peace with the air, the land and oceans.”

The annual Ecumenical Youth Concert aims to celebrate the different denominations and for young people to come together to share and display unity in the body of Christ.