

16 January 2012

Dear Member Schools, Overseas partners and Member churches,

Greetings in the Name of our Triune God.

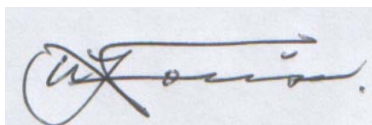
It is with much pleasure that I extend to you all belated New Year greetings. The faithfulness of God's Grace continues to bless and sustain us. The Christmas and New Year break seems a mere distant memory as we once more launch our work for 2012. I trust the holiday period was a relaxing and an enjoyable time rejuvenating your minds, bodies and spirits.

This is our Council year, scheduled for the end of May and beginning of June. *Hermon Theological College of the Etaretia Porotetani Maohi* (French Polynesia) will be our host. There is much to prepare to ensure issues pertaining to the development of theological education in our schools and churches are properly debated and informed responsible decisions are made. Exciting possibilities of new membership and partnerships are earmarked for the meeting, as well as hearing the reports of SPATS work during the last two years. So come prepared for what I believe would be earnest and fruitful discussions. It is imperative that all member schools make an effort to be represented at the Council.

It would appear that the scope of SPATS work has increased in recent years. There is therefore a need to revisit the Constitution and re-evaluate the relevance of the original mandate. SPATS cannot afford to ignore the changes that are currently being entertained by the other two ecumenical regional bodies (The Pacific Conference of Churches and Pacific Theological College) given its close working relationship with them. The mode of theological education is also beginning to change as issues relating to the socio-political life of churches intensifies. Workshops and consultations on such matters have become the forte of learning outside the classroom. The participation of staff, faculty members and students of our theological schools need to be encouraged and pursued. These learning's compliment the traditional curriculum and methodology that many of our theological schools are locked in. The time to cultivate one's ability to be able to 'think outside the box' is an essential part of 'theologising' that has been neglected over the years.

I offer my prayerful support and best wishes to all Principals and members of their Faculties in your work for 2012. May God's Spirit and Wisdom bless and guide you as you strive to honour your calling to serve God in your vocation as servants and shepherds of His people.

With the utmost respect,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Feleterika Nokise', written over a light-colored rectangular background.

Rev. Dr Feleterika Nokise
President, SPATS