

CH 402

American Samoa District

The small area of American Samoa had a population of 20,051 in 1960 compared to 114,427 in Western Samoa.¹ In that same year there were about 53 CCCS congregations in American Samoa compared to the 183 in Western Samoa.²

In the early 1960s American Samoa's fortunes improved immensely under the new Governor Rex Lee in May 1961.³ Lee had convinced the United States government to pour money into American Samoa. Lee introduced changes almost immediately.

- He improved infrastructure, built a new hospital and made education a priority: new schools were built and television educational programmes introduced into every village school.⁴
- From 1962 to 1968 the value of American Samoan exports rose from 7.3 million to 25 million dollars.⁵
- By contrast Western Samoa's export earnings in the same period declined from 6 million to 4.7 million dollars.⁶
- **Hugh Neems**, the resident LMS missionary in American Samoa, saw how the growing prosperity of American Samoa and changed the church.⁷ From 1966 to 1971 it consistently contributed the largest *taulaga* of all the districts, from £14,304 to \$31,907 per annum.⁸

In February 1962 the American Samoan District annual meeting put the following proposals before the General Assembly meeting in May. They proposed that they:

- be allowed to form their own General Assembly, have more control over financial matters,
- closer fellowship with American Congregationalists, and
- the use of its own *taulaga*.⁹

The form of autonomy that American Samoa was seeking was again discussed in the 1962 General Assembly.¹⁰ The General Assembly requested that the American Samoans to rethink their plans for more autonomy.¹¹ In September 1962 the American Samoa district adopted and registered under the name of 'Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa'.¹²

The CCCS was not worried because by the end of 1961, the CCCS was confident that the American Congregational organisations (UCC) agreed not to interfere with any church under the CCCS. The influence of Suitonu in California reassured the CCCS that no American Congregationalist organisation would interfere in American Samoa.

¹ Norma McArthur, "Commentary Contemporary Polynesian Emigration from Samoa and the Cook Islands". *Journal of Polynesian Society* 73, no.3 (1964): 336.

² Tapa Faletose, "Ripoti o le Galuega Faa-le-Tausaga Na Faaiuina-Aperila 31 1967". Apia: Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa, 1967, 3 (CCCSA).

³ Ralph Craib, "American Samoa Is Booming at Last". *Pacific Islands Monthly* 33 May 1962, 51-52 (CCCSA).

⁴ "American Samoan Building Boom". *Pacific Islands Monthly* 33 May 1962, 18 (CCCSA).

⁵ Ian Fairbairn, "Pacific Island Economics". *Journal of Polynesian Society* 80, no.1 (1971): 89.

⁶ Ian Fairbairn, "Pacific Island Economics", 89.

⁷ Hugh Neems to CCCS, 1 January 1962, 1-2 (CCCSA).

⁸ Harry Betham, "O le Tala o le Tupe Aperila 1 1966-Mati 31 1967". Apia: Komiti Tupe, 1967. All currency is in Western Samoan currency.

⁹ Clarence Norwood, "Samoa Missionary Meeting 4 May 1962". Malua: Samoa Missionary Committee, 1962, 2. 62SMM66; Panama Mutu, "Mau mai le Matagaluega a Tutuila ma Manu'a i lana Tofiga Tele. Feb 19-23 1962". Pago Pago, American Samoa: Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa, 1962, 3.

¹⁰ Clarence Norwood, "Samoa Missionary Meeting 4 May 1962". Malua: Samoa Missionary Committee, 1962, 2. 62SMM66;

¹¹ Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *Iugafono o le Fono Tele i Malua Me 24-28 1962*. Apia: Malua Printing Press, 1962, 5. 62FT18.

¹² Elia Taase, *Ina ia tatou iloa: O le Talafaasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Amerika Samoa mai le amataga o le LMS e oo i le 2005*, 141.

The 1964 General Assembly refused any requests for financial autonomy for American Samoa. It was against ‘the Constitution because the Constitution did not permit a district to use its own funds for its own development.’¹³ The General Assembly did offer:

- approved finance for church and land for the Congregation at Tafuna.¹⁴ The land in Tafuna was planned as a permanent site to house the popular Bible studies led by Neems.¹⁵
- finance was approved for land and church offices at Fagatogo, and building renovations at Fagalele.¹⁶
- The Church brought land in Pago Pago and had it registered under the American District thereby giving the district effective control over how it was used.

In order to make American Samoa happy, the General Assembly and the Elders’ Committee made the American Samoan District more involved in the CCCS. In 1964, for example, the Elders’ Committee

- 1 granted the Rev. Panama Mutu of American Samoa a one-year scholarship to New Zealand.¹⁷
- 2 approved an ASSISTANT TREASURER for the Tutuila District.¹⁸ The ‘first’ assistant treasurer in American Samoa was the Rev. Tulafono Faagau of Tutuila who served from 1964 to 1967.¹⁹
- 3 in the 1965 General Assembly a delegate from American Samoa was appointed to the EDUCATION COMMITTEE.²⁰
- 4 the CCCS was prepared to hold the **1970 General Assembly** in the major village of Fagatogo on the island of Tutuila.²¹
- 5 From 1966 to 1969 the Elders’ Committee eagerly published in their minutes the increasing number of American candidates sitting the Malua Theological Exams, from two candidates in 1966 to nineteen candidates in 1969.
- 6 In 1968 American Samoa had the most candidates of any district preparing to be lay preachers.
- 7 American Samoa’s financial contributions were also regularly published in the Church magazine, *O Le Sulu*.
- 8 Tafuna was also the site for a Bible School. When the Bible school did not happen Neems became active in searching for assistance from the American Board of World Mission to provide teachers for his Bible classes. Even in his last year in Samoa (1968), Neems was still active in looking for ministerial help for American Samoa.²² There was no assistance from America because of the agreement by the American Congregationalists not to interfere with any church UNDER the CCCS.

¹³ Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *The General Assembly of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, Malua Western Samoa 25–29 May 1964*. Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1964, 7. 64GA23.

¹⁴ Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *The General Assembly of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, Malua Western Samoa 25–29 May 1964*, 7. 64GA23.

¹⁵ Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *The General Assembly of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, Malua Western Samoa 25–29 May 1964*, 6–7. 64GA23.

¹⁶ “London Missionary Society, Pacific Committee. Tuesday 5 May 1964”. London: London Missionary Society, 1964, 1. 64PAC4.

¹⁷ Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa. *Tusi O Iugafono a le Au Toeaina 1952–1978*, 74. 64KAT37; Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *The General Assembly of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, Malua Western Samoa 25–29 May 1964*, 3. 64GA10. This scholarship had been offered by the Old Pupils of the LMS schools residing in New Zealand.

¹⁸ Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *The General Assembly of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, Malua Western Samoa 25–29 May 1964*, 3. 64GA8.

¹⁹ Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, *The General Assembly of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, Malua Western Samoa 25–29 May 1964*, 12. 64GA40.

²⁰ Vaifou Faraimo, “Fono Komiti A’oga 4 Iulai 1964–26 Me 1965”. Malua: Komiti A’oga, 1965, 4; Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. *The General Assembly of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, Malua Western Samoa 25–29 May 1965*. Malua: Malua Printing Press, 1965, 8. 65FT21.

²¹ Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa. *Tusi o Iugafono a le Au Toeaina 1952–1978*, 50. 62KAT43; Etene Saaga to John M Haydon, 6 April 1970 (CCCSA).

²² “London Missionary Society Pacific Committee, Tuesday 12 January 1965”. London: London Missionary Society, 1965, 2. See 65PAC11 (CCCSA).