

History of CCCS in Hawaii & California

CH 402

Pita Tamaligi Leasau had arrived in Hawaii in 1949, before **that arrival of Pita** Malae and Suitonu Suitonu., **Leasau** took over the leadership of the Samoan (LMS) services in 1950. **Leasau was an** ordained minister **who** graduated from Malua Theological College in 1948.¹ First service conducted by **Leasau** was held on February 6, 1950.

- The new congregation was called ‘O le Lotu Samoa (LMS) in Honolulu.²**Leasau** led the Honolulu congregation for the **next three years**. On February 8 1953 it celebrated its third anniversary.³ In May of **1953 Leasau passed away**.
- Before his death the HEA (**Hawaiian Evangelical Association**) was keen to have the new Samoan (LMS) Church in Honolulu under its umbrella.⁴**Leasau** responded that the congregation was not yet at a stage to come under the authority of the HEA and wanted to remain under the supervision of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Samoa.⁵**Leasau** wanted to keep thing as it were.⁶
- The Foreign Secretary of the LMS, Reverend C. Stuart Craig, visited the Samoan Church in Honolulu.⁷ Craig wrote to Hoadley to confirm that the Samoan (LMS) church in Honolulu should affiliate with the HEA.⁸

Hoadley accepted Craig’s suggestion, and started negotiation with the Board of the HEA. It was made clear that the relationship between the HEA and the Samoan (LMS) Church in Honolulu did not terminate the supervision of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Samoa over the church in Honolulu.⁹

The HEA accepted this arrangement and offered their support to the Samoan (LMS) Church in Honolulu.

In June 1953, the church sought a replacement for **Leasau**. Unfortunately there were two opposing groups. The majority of members followed Suitonu Suitonu:

- who was **related to Leasau**,
- was a **lay preacher** of the Samoan (LMS) Church.

The other group, led by **Reverend Uatimani** and assisted by **Pita Malae**.¹⁰ He had served as a Minister to the Samoan (LMS) Church in Fiji **and also in** Olosega, (Manu’a).¹¹Uatimani wrote to the Elders’ Committee of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Samoa, stating that Suitonu should not be looking after a parish as he was only a lay preacher.¹²The Elders’ Committee decided in favour of **Uatimani** as the leader of the congregation in Honolulu. The decision was strongly opposed by Suitonu and his supporters. Suitonu claimed:

- **Uatimani** was unsuccessful in both ministries because of his immoral character. Uatimani had tried to force himself onto a Samoan female doctor whilst on board the vessel *Manu’a Tele*. Uatimani was also charged with having an affair with a woman in Fagatogo, American Samoa. Both women were members of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Honolulu.¹³
- **Uatimani** was also labeled an alcoholic, and was known to be **drunk** on Sundays.

¹Malua Theological College Record Book. Record Book kept at the office of the Principal of Malua Theological College, Malua, Samoa

²“O le Lotu Samoa i Honolulu” *O le Sulu Samoa*. Feb 1950. CCCS Archive, Apia, Samoa

³Filo Tauivale, “To Sing the Lords Song in a Foriegn Land: A Brief History of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Hawaii 1950 – 1970”. Bachelor of Divinity, Malua Theological College, 2005.14.

⁴The HEA (Hawaiian Evangelical Association) was a church organization which include the Protestant church and Congregational Churches under its control. Today it is known as the United Church of Christ (UCC)

⁵FiloTauivale, “To Sing the Lords Song in a Foriegn Land: A Brief History of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Hawaii 1950 – 1970”. Bachelor of Divinity, Malua Theological College, 2005.15.

⁶“Pita Tamaligi Leasau to K.T Faletose,” letter, Mar 6, 1953. CCCS Archive, Apia, Samoa

⁷The LMS Missionary, Rev. Jack Hoadley, was stationed in Tutuila in 1953

⁸“Rev. Elder Tapeni Ioelu to Vavae Toma,” letter, Sept 2, 1953. (CCCSA); “O.J Leslie Dunstan to Missionary Brame, Chairman of the (LMS) in Samoa,” letter, Sept 18, 1953.(CCCSA), Apia, Samoa; “Wilma F Hillmer to Missionary Jack Hoadley,” letter, Oct 19, 1954. (CCCSA)

⁹“Rev. Elder Tapeni Ioelu to Vavae Toma,” letter, Sept 2, 1953. (CCCSA).

¹⁰Filo Tauivale, “To Sing the Lords Song in a Foriegn Land: A Brief History of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Hawaii 1950 – 1970”. Bachelor of Divinity, Malua Theological College, 2005.14.

¹¹“Suitonu Suitonu to the Elders’ Committee,” letter, Oct 26, 1953. (CCCSA).

¹²“Uatimani to the Elders’ Committee of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Samoa,” letter, Dec 28, 1953. (CCCSA).

¹³“Suitonu to the Elders’ Committee,” letter, Oct 26, 1953. (CCCSA).

- All funds of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Honolulu were transferred to his personal control, including funds of the Men's group which was US\$2904.67, and funds for the Women's group which was US\$1,200.63, a total of US\$4,105.30.¹⁴
- **Uatimani** rarely attended church worship and other church activities while in Hawaii. He did not even attend the funeral of **Leasau**, even though he was the only ordained Samoan Minister who could have performed the funeral service. (A chaplain of the USA Army performed the funeral service of **Leasau**.)¹⁵
- **Uatimani** was **responsible** for the split in their church.¹⁶ **When Leasau** was minister of the Church in Honolulu, Uatimani tried to persuade members of the congregation to form a new parish. He was not interested in working together with **Leasau**.
- Since the death of **Leasau**, Uatimani stopped attending church services altogether.

These charges reflected not only Suitonu's rejection of Uatimani, but also the disappointment of church members over the Elders' Committee's decision. The church members felt they should have made the decision as they were the ones attending the church, and were more aware of what was happening.

Suitonu also pointed out that Reverend Elder Alesana had influenced the decision, as Alesana's daughter, Mine, was married to Uatimani.¹⁷ In any case, the church member's threatened to break away from the Samoan (LMS) Church in Samoa, and join the HEA, if Uatimani continued to be the **pastor** of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Honolulu.¹⁸

The 1954 General Assembly in Malua resolved that a visitation team to Hawaii was necessary. The visitation team would make the final decision. Reverend Elder Tapeni Ioelu, the Chairman of the General Assembly, and Elder Deacon LeiatoTuli from the District of Tutuila and Manu'a, were selected to carry out the wish of the General Assembly. In October 1954, the visitation team arrived in Hawaii and were greeted by representatives of the HEA. They held talks on the issues raised by the two groups.¹⁹

On October 23, 1954, both groups were present at the Church in Kawaiahao,²⁰ Honolulu, where the final decision was to be given by the visiting delegation.²¹ The final decision was announced.

- Pita Malae was appointed pastor over the congregation, with certain conditions. Malae would not perform any Funeral services, Holy Communions, Marriages, or Baptisms.

Uatimani and his supporters questioned the decision made by the visitation team in choosing Malae, who was not an ordained minister, and not a graduate of the Malua Theological College. Uatimani's wife, Mine, also wrote to Ioelu, **at her** disappointment over the decision.²² Mine felt that the final decision was influenced by Ioelu's relationship with Malae.²³ Uatimani left the Samoa (LMS) Church in Honolulu and joined a European Church in Pearl City, while Suitonu unhappily accepted the decision and migrated to mainland USA where he founded the first Samoan (LMS) Church in San Diego.²⁴

¹⁴ "Suitonu to the Elders' Committee," letter, Oct 26, 1953. (CCCSA).

¹⁵ "Suitonu to the Elders' Committee," letter, Oct 26, 1953. (CCCSA).

¹⁶ "Suitonu to the Elders' Committee," letter, Oct 26, 1953. (CCCSA).

¹⁷ Alesana was a members of the Elders' Committee of the Samoan (LMS) Church in Samoa. He was a lecturer at Malua Theological College from 1937 – 1955. See "150 Years Commemoration Monument of Malua Theological College," Malua, Samoa; see also Kenape T Faletose. *A History of the Samoan Church [LMS]*. Malua Press, Apia, 1959, 82-83

¹⁸ "Members of Suitonu's Group to Vavae Toma," letter, Oct 30, 1953. (CCCSA).

¹⁹ Interview with LiulamaTavete. Honolulu, Hawaii. Jan 15, 2005. He passed away on Feb. 4, 2005

²⁰ Kawaiahao Church is the Headquarters of the HEA. It is a place for meetings and conferences for the churches under the HEA at the time

²¹ Interview with LiulamaTavete. Honolulu, Hawaii. Jan 15, 2005

²² "Mine Uatimani to Rev. Elder Tapeni Ioelu," letter, Jan 26, 1954. (CCCSA).

²³ "Mine Uatimani to Rev. Elder Tapeni Ioelu," letter, Jan 26, 1954. CCCS, Archive.; "Interview with Rev. Elia Taase.Nuuuli, American Samoa. Dec 17, 2004. He pointed out that Pita Malae's wife FiapaipaiLutu was related to Tapeni's wife

²⁴ "Suitonu to Rev. Elder Tapeni Ioelu," letter, Jan 22, 1955. (CCCSA).; see also "Faaulufalega Malumalu o le Atua Ekalesia.Faapotopotoga Kerisiano a Samoa I San Diego, o Lona Igoa o le Satauro Paia" *O le Sulu Samoa*.Feb. 1964