

History of the EFKS (Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa)

Aai o Niue from 1866 to 2016

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Rev Efu Efu

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to record some of the history of EFKS Aai o Niue Parish from 1966 to 2016. The EFKS Aai o Niue is one of the longest serving parishes under the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, formerly the London Missionary Society (LMS). It was established in 1866; thirty six years after the arrival of the first LMS missionary team in Samoa, and twenty years after the LMS reached Niue, where the founders of the Aai o Niue people came from.

As reflected by the current upgraded situation of the Aai o Niue church, its parishioners, both past and present, underwent a lot of changes and endured a lot of challenges over a long period of time. However, most of these important changes have gone unnoticed because of the lack of records.

I therefore feel that for an entity of such longevity as the EFKS Aai o Niue, it is very important to have a history of its existence. This publication will better enable future generations of the parish to reflect on the past work of their parents and grandparents. At the same time it will inspire them to remain connected with their spiritual roots.

Past parishioners, on the other hand, will also have something to ponder in terms of their contributions and efforts, in bringing the parish to its present standard. This thesis may encourage their young ones who are greatly influenced by the waves of charismatic movements, through the record of their hard labour, to remain loyal to the EFKS.

I have served as religious minister of this church for twelve years now. Last year, in 2016, the church celebrated 150 years since its establishment in 1866. I am interested in its history since I am part Niuean myself, and the land


that was given to the original residents of Aai o Niue for settlement and establishment of the church, was from my Samoan family. That land is now called Aai o Niue, and the church has been named thereafter the Congregational Christian Church of Aai o Niue (EFKS Aai o Niue). I hope that this thesis will give light to the people of Niue and its future generations, regarding their contribution to the ministry and the work of God. It will also be a reminder to my Samoan family of the significance of our forefathers' pledge to God and His ministry.

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DECLARATION

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I also declare that this thesis has not used any material, heard or read, without academically appropriate acknowledgment of the source.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all the members of the EFKS Aai o Niue, and present it in commemoration of the church's 150th anniversary. I would also like to dedicate this work to all the late Religious Ministers who have given their lives in establishing and keeping this Church alive. I would also like to dedicate this work to the late High Chief of Apia, Seumanutafa Moepogai, who was the first to offer his land for the establishment of the Church. I would also like to dedicate this work to my beautiful wife Hana Iliganoa Osooso and my lovely children Epaggelia, Livingstone, Ioannes, Grace and Sauaunoasereanaoleusoaliioletalalelei. Most of all, I would like to honour and glorify God for His love and guidance, that has made it possible for me to complete this task.

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A big *faafetai tele* to the CCCS Aai o Niue and members for embracing me and my family as part of your community. I thank you for your prayers

and support in many ways. I believe your continuous support has enabled the successful completion not only of this work, but of my pastoral duties for the last 12 years of our covenant. *Faamalo le tapuai ma ia faamanuia atu le Atua!*

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GOD BLESSES YOU ALL!!!

List of Abbreviations

EFKS	Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
CCCS	Congregational Christian Church Samoa
AON	Aai o Niue
LMS	London Missionary Society
PNG	Papua New Guinea
FIFA	Football International Federation Association
MTC	Malua Theological College
REV	Reverend
CWM	Council of World Mission
CHCH	Christchurch
NUS	National University of Samoa
ACC	Accident Compensation Cooperation
TL	Tunufai Lautalatoa
AST	Analosa Sasa Tevita
FESA	Fire Emergency Services Authority
PCC	Pacific Council of Churches
ACEO	Acting Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

The establishment of the Aai o Niue (AON) church in Samoa has been a long and strenuous journey. I speak from first-hand experience as I have been the minister for the village of Aai o Niue for over 12 years and am still currently serving. The Church celebrated its 150th year anniversary on November 2016 since its establishment in 1866. My interest in its history stems from my heritage as I am part Niuean and Samoan, and am a part of the history of both the village and church in Aai o Niue as a large part of land that was given for the settlement and establishing of the church was from my Samoan ancestry. The land given to the Niueans to settle was first named ‘Aai o Niue’, translated as ‘The Land of Niue’. As the village developed, the Niueans who settled in Samoa began to form a church, in which was named after the village and came to be known as the Congregational Christian Church Samoa Aai o Niue (CCCS Aai o Niue). The aim of this thesis is to inform and properly write a history of the establishment of the Aai o Niue for its past, present and future generations of their contributions in the Ministry and the work of God. This work will also serve as a reminder to my Samoan family the significance of our forefather’s pledge to God and His Ministry as well as the Niuean people living in Samoa. A number of important historical events related to the establishment of the CCCS Aai Niue parish will be covered in this research, and will also serve as a ground-breaking work as there are limited resources related to this topic of research.

Chapter one will focus mainly on the background of the arrival of Niueans in Samoa and how they came to contact with the people of Samoa. This chapter will also focus on the reason behind the Niueans interests to

migrate to Samoa and establish both village and church. This chapter will also discuss the Niueans access to such prominent land in Apia, the capital of Samoa, and the granting of family land to found what is today known as the Aai o Niue, or the Village of Niue.

Chapter two will focus on the church establishment with the succession of religious ministers who worked vigorously to develop the both the village and church community. This chapter will also discuss the development of the Niueans church services; the way they operated and conducted their worship which included preaching, scripture reading, and the singing of hymns. This chapter will also focus on the construction of the church building and its properties from throughout the years and different stages of completion. This chapter will conclude with the acknowledgement for the various Religious Ministers and their time of service in Aai o Niue.

Chapter three will discuss the importance of the Church of Aai o Niue and its contribution to the lives of the people of Niue, and also the Samoans who came to worship and be a part of this community. This chapter will also focus on the contribution of its parishioners to the development of the social, political, economic and spiritual aspects of the Church.

Chapter four is the conclusion of this research and will discuss some theological implications that will assist in assessing and analysing the history of the Aai o Niue church and village for present and future generations.

Chapter 1: Background of the Arrival of Niueans in Samoa

1.1. How Niueans Came into Contact with Samoans

As Christianity spread throughout the Eastern parts of the Pacific during the late 1700's to the early 1800's, the London Missionary Society (LMS) began to employ its strategy of using native agents to spread the Gospel to the Western isles of the Pacific and Melanesia (Moyle 1984, 84). In an effort to evangelize other uncharted islands, such as Niue, the missionary John Williams from the LMS recruited two Niueans by the name Uea and Niumaga to assist in the missionary work. This tactic failed as one local Uea was killed with his father, while Niumaga was chased away and sought refuge on the island of Samoa. This is just one of the many instances in which the Island of Niue came to be known as the "Savage Island" (Pointer 2015, 30). After Christianity had arrived in Samoa in 1830, the Samoan 'teacher'¹ was spearheading missionary work for the LMS in the Pacific just after nine years. With the death of John Williams in 1839 on the island of Vanuatu (Erromanga), the Samoan 'teacher' continued to evangelize other neighbouring islands, especially to the West (Liua'ana 1996, 48).

In 1832, a Niuean by the name of Peniamina was taken on the whaler vessel and arrived at Falealupo, Savaii; the larger island of the western Samoan islands. Soon after, Peniamina left to Palauli (south east part of

¹The term Samoan 'teacher' is used to show the status in which the island missionary workers were labelled by their superior European missionaries. This idea was not limited to the Samoan, but to other islanders as well as seen throughout this work. For example, Niuean 'teacher'. The European missionaries purposely labelled the natives as teacher, in order to maintain their superiority over them.

Savaii) where he was baptised by Reverend Alexander Mac Donald, the missionary who took care of him and taught him how to read and write (Fauolo 1995, 141). Peniamina was set to go back trying to convey the gospel to his own people after many years under the influence of Reverend Mac Donald.

Peniamina's arrival in Samoa was an opportunity for the LMS missionary to get someone to impose the Gospel in Niue. It was also a common process for the missionaries to use local agents to act as translators or interpreters in order for communication to be much easier. The missionaries also used the local people that were Christianised in order for their own people to see the changes within their lifestyle and manners and accepted the message of the Gospel that they proclaimed (Pointer 2015, 53).

In 1842, about ten years since Peniamina was in Samoa learning how to perform missionary work, he was willing to go back to Niue to try and evangelize his people. In March 1842 Reverend Aaron Buzacott left Rarotonga for Sydney visiting the island en route on the mission vessel the '*Camden*' (Lovett 1899, 11; Pointer 2015, 58). Peniamina was on that vessel with four other Cook Island mission teachers hoping to land them on the island of Niue. It was an unsuccessful mission and operation despite negotiation in trading items such as axes and fishing hooks for their chiefs. Trading was a method used in Society Islands and the Cooks to win over a chief who could then influence his people. However, as mission visitors to Niue had already learned, such a system was ineffective on an island where there was little social stratification and chiefly influence was extremely localised (Pointer 2015, 59). Reverend Buzacott realised the danger they

faced and was willing to return to Samoa for the safety of the missionaries. They returned to Apia where Peniamina was now under the care of Reverend Williams Mill and later Mr Drummond, since Peniamina wished not to return to Savaii. Peniamina was further educated for missionary work, and eventually got the chance to attend Malua Theological College, which was established in 1844 under the supervision of missionary Reverend George Turner (Fauolo 1995, 141).

Fresh from his return from Niue and new revived spirit and vigour obtained at the Malua Theological College after four years, Peniamina was ready and was sent back for his second attempt at spreading the Gospel to Niue (Pointer 2015, 59). He was living in Samoa for more than fourteen years, adapting to the culture and lifestyle of the Samoan people. The missionaries believe that it was through his experience with the Samoans of discipline, respect, faithfulness and other Christian morals that Peniamina was well prepared for the task.

The European missionaries keep knocking on the doors of heaven through prayers for a suitable time to try their luck to continue the spreading of the gospel to other places such as Niue. Their prayers were answered when Peniamina landed on the shores of his homeland with a fellow Rarotongan island teacher, named Fakafitiniu. Fakafitiniu was also on a whaler vessel that came to Samoa during previous years after the arrival of Peniamina. He was also cared for by the missionaries in Apia like Peniamina, and was ready to accompany his Niuean partner (Fauolo 1995, 141). Despite the uncertainty of other European missionaries with Peniamina's status as a teacher, let alone even being considered a Christian, Reverend Murray insisted on him to carry

on the mission. After the first failed attempt of mission and the savage behaviour from the Niueans, Peniamina was their best and only hope (Pointer 2015, 60).

The ship *John Williams* under the command of Captain Morgan, took Peniamina and Fakafitiniu in 1846 as a part of the mission to Niue, led by Reverend William Gill and Henry Nisbet (Pointer 2015, 60). They were accompanied by other Samoan and Rarotongan mission teachers with the hope of landing safely on the island of Niue. Fakafitiniu went ashore on the bay of Mutalau and asked if Peniamina and a Samoan teacher or Rarotongan teacher could land. After some time of discussion and negotiation, only Peniamina was permitted to come ashore but not the other island teachers (Pointer 2015, 60). It was a sign that there was hope of light in the tunnel of darkness when Peniamina was able to come ashore knowing that his people was well known of killing their own, especially those who returned after contact with the outside world. As they landed at the bay, they were overlooked by the callous faces of savage people with weapons. With this scene of the appearance of the savage people, the story has been told and the message has been heard that they do not want any interference from the outside world (Pointer 2015, 60).

Peniamina was able to land ashore on the 26th of October 1846 when he was floated ashore by means of a long line and into a canoe that was also attached to a long line and was hauled in through the waves (Pointer 2015, 60). He was escorted as a prisoner surrounded by pointing arrows and spears and words of rejection by the locals. The savage people pushed him around and rejected him from home to home. They wanted to destroy his canoe

because they believed it could bring diseases from other woods of foreigner lands. Peniamina's belongings eventually were all stolen (Fauolo 1995, 141). Despite all these difficulties that Peniamina faced, he was able to convince them that he brings no harm but only good news of the Gospel that he wished to proclaim. The Gospel and the new religion that he now professed was able to teach the Niuean people how to read and write, be civilized, and enter into a new world that provided material goods (Pointer 2015, 61).

Within two years on August 1848 since Peniamina arrived on Niue, George Turner and Henry Nisbet sailed to check the missionary work and progress at New Hebrides and New Caledonia. As they were on their way, they made a stop at Niue to conclude their visitation to see how Peniamina and the mission progressed. To their surprise, a canoe paddled towards them shouting out Peniamina's name, pointing to another canoe (Pointer 2015, 60). To their relief Peniamina survived and was still alive and well, knowing that the savage people were notorious of killing their own.² Christianity had been established from there on and spread throughout the island.

The following year, in 1849, after the visit of Reverend Turner and Reverend Nisbet, the European missionaries saw a demand for more teachers, since there was rapid progress from Peniamina's work. Therefore the mission vessel returned with a Samoan teacher, Paulo³ and his wife to begin the task of establishing a mission station at Mutalau (Pointer 2015, 61). They were

² George Turner wrote in his book 'Nineteen Years in Polynesian' "The first canoe relieved our minds. They echoed his name, pointing behind, and soon we had our old friend on board shaking hands with us."

³ Paulo Aneseko Faasavalu is from the village of Matautu Falelatai who station with his family at Alofi from 1849- 1859. He translated the Niuean Bible the New Testament with the help of Rev Lawes the first white missionary in the island. Paulo build the first church building in the island in 1852.

there to assist Peniamina even though the LMS missionaries noticed that Peniamina's activities were inconsistent- an allusion to the rumours that he had committed adultery (Fauolo 1995, 143). From this point on, the mission to Niue was spearheaded by the influx of Samoan teachers after Peniamina's foundational work.⁴ It was from this point on that the Niuean people came to know and be affiliated with the Samoan people. It was also the opportunity to land white missionaries and the continuation of their contact with the civilized world.

1.2. What Caused the Niuean People to Travel to Samoa

The gate has been opened up for the outside world into the island of Niue. It has brought the good news and the civilized way of living. The effort to Christianize the people from their savage life and nakedness was also faced with other difficulties. It was like the fulfilment of one of Jesus' saying "the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light" (NRSV, John 3:19). Christianity has spread with the missionary work and changes the life style of the people and to remain loyal to their conversion (Pointer 2015, 118). But there was also the spread of news talking about the civilized world afar that will bring them material possession. Material goods exposed them to unmitigated evil and would then cause social disruption on their return to the island. For the first time

⁴ There was Samuela who was stationed at Avatele from 1852 and Paula the same year. Amosa came in 1857 and was stationed at Hakupu. Sakaio at Makefu in 1857 till 1859, and Elia the same year and followed by Luteru and Neemia in 1890 to 1896. Luka that same year 1896, and Sekuini was stationed with his family at Avatele in 1964. This list is provided on page 144 in Oka Fauolo's book titled *O Vavega o le Alofa Lavea'i*.

Niueansoil has been polluted by drunken natives with the same unmoral attitude (Pointer 2015, 118).

There was much sorrow and grief with the urge of wanting the wealth that the European possessed for their everyday living, such as clothing, jewellery, weapons, tools, ships, and technology at the time. This was due to the fact that they wanted to travel to other countries to work, explore and adventure (Pointer 2015, 117). Even though they were kidnapped and taken as labourers for trade and sold to companies looking for workers, to work in guano fields and coconut mills, they still insisted on dealing with Europeans.

In 1860, George Lawes⁵ was the first white missionary to be stationed on Niue. Lawes fought hard to encourage the people not to make any more contact with the Europeans. There were those that came as traders, but in fact they were the ones that kidnapped them and sold them to other countries such as Peru, North America, Australia, and Chincha Island (Pointer 2015, 120). There was not much Lawes could do to prevent the Niueans from contacting the Europeans, even though there was a law to band them from going ashore to vessels that came for trade (Pointer 2015, 115).

On January the 28th 1863, a Peruvian ship came and took a group of Niueans from Avatele to work the guano fields on Chincha islands off the coast of Peru. Others were recruited with responsibility from leaders of the community who were paid to work in Samoa on German copra plantations (Garrett 1982, 137). Lawes was deeply saddened by these events:

A sad night is this at Avatele, scarcely a family but has lost
some one, many wives made widows, fathers sonless and

⁵George Lawes was the first white missionary to land in Niue in 1860 with his wife Fanny and remains in until 1872.

children fatherless-the whole village is weeping and howling-nothing else can be heard. 'Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted' (Pointer 2015,113).

Despite these incidents of kidnapping, the people never learned and listened to George Lawes and his advice. They still have hopes of the wealth from the outside world. The trouble of kidnapping continued on until 1865, until finally it came to a stop when the Labour Trade became legal (Matheson 1987, 65). With the legalization of the labour trade, the wealth afar could now come into a realization as Niueans and other islanders were able to travel freely for work abroad.

In 1865 the first lot of about 100 young men of indentured labourers were sent to Samoa. They were young and strong with a reputation for not returning no matter the circumstances. These young men began work for the Godeffroy and Sons Company in Apia, a company mainly dealing with copra (Matheson 1987, 65). Many Niueans stayed in Apia as they settled in Samoa. Apia was a popular destination like any other capital or urban area for foreigners looking for work and shelter, as it even offered simple things such as bright lights which were foreign in Alofi, the capital of Niue (Pointer 2015, 119). When their contract was finished, some Niueans were not ready to return to Niue, so they simply disappeared hovering around Apia looking for places to settle (Garrett 1982, 137). The majority of Niueans that came to Samoa were already Christianized. There was a close bond between the Samoans and Niueans, especially for the Niueans who received the Gospel from their Samoan brothers and sisters. This bond I believe was the reason that the Niueans who settled in Apia tried desperately to stay in Samoa. As a

result, a distinct Niuean community in Apia and the creation of a settlement known as Aai o Niue was established (Matheson 1987, 66).

The group of Niueans that came in 1865 to work for the copra industry were most likely the ones that established the *Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa* (EFKS) Aai o Niue Church, formally known as the London Missionary Society (LMS) Aai o Niue in 1866 (Matheson 1987, 65). This may also be the same group that came in 1863 those that have been recruited through bribery from leaders of community who disappeared and had been taken and put on the Peruvian ship headed for Samoa (Garrett 1982, 137). Workers from Niue were given certain periods of time to work as contractors, similar to Chinese workers. Most contracts lasted for three years, and then they were supposed to return to their island nation. Instead of them returning home, hundreds of Niueans sought refuge in the Apia town area. With the arrival of Niueans in Samoa in 1863 and their labour contract ending in 1866, this supports my assumption that these Niuean pioneers were the ones who established and formed the church in Aai o Niue in November of 1866 (Matheson 1987, 65).

1.3. Granting Land in Apia for Settlement

Apia was a more popular destination for the Niueans to come and work because of its similarity to their homeland as the Samoan language and culture was similar to that of the Niueans (Pointer 2015, 119). Many of the Niueans were not eager to return after their contracts were finished, but wanted to remain as long as possible until they were either deported or renewed their contracts. In some cases, their contracts ceased and were forced to return to Niue. However some simply disappeared and were hunted by

the Samoans who were offered a reward for the return of any contract laborers who had escaped (Pointer 2015, 119). These Niueans were familiarized with the Apia area and its culturally governance and understood its chiefly system that rules the Apia area. With this understanding, they sought refuge and shelter to the chief of Apia just as their culturally norm back home which was governed by high ranking chiefs (Pointer 2015, 61). These Niueans were young single men with reputations as hard and honest workers. Women were not exempted from this type of work, but were more suitable to household duties as practiced by the Tuvaluan culture. They were resourceful individuals and were accepted into Samoa by the paramount chief of Apia, the *ali'i* (chief) Seumanutafa⁶ who permitted them to occupy customary land near the center of Apia Township. This area became known as Aai o Niue or Niue settlement (Matheson 1987, 65).

The majority of Niueans who worked and stayed in Aai o Niue were Christianized by the Samoan missionaries who brought the gospel to their island in an effort to change their savage life into one led by Christian morals. With this belief in mind and the Christian life of living they were opting to build a churchly community to keep them united. It was also the wish of the paramount chief that they were given the land; it was for them to establish a church community. In order to keep a strong and close relationship with the paramount chief Seumanutafa, the Niueans were bestowed with the title “the *Usoalii of Seumanutafa*”, translated the ‘Brotherhood of Seumanutafa’. Their residence depended upon the continuity of harmonious relationships with the

⁶Seumanutafa Moepogai I, is the *ali'i*, a high chief of Apia or so-called owner of the customary land of the Seumanutafa family, now called the Aai o Niue.

Samoan chief and his *aiga potopoto* (extended family). The Niuean served the title and chief Seumanutafa, and in return received permissive rights to the land they occupied (Matheson 1987, 66). One of the duties the Niueans were responsible for serving Seumanutafa and his family was maintaining and erecting tombstones or graves for the chief who held the family title at the time of their death (Seumanutafa, 2016).

1.4. Critical Analysis

Although there were difficulties and dangerous challenges that faced the missionaries in evangelizing the island of Niue due to their savage behavior, eventually God made way for His Good News to be heard to these lost souls. Even though one of their own sons Peniamina made the first deliverance of the gospel, but it was the spearhead and determination of the Samoan missionaries who made the momentous effort of spreading the gospel throughout the island. The *faasamoa* or the Samoan way of life discipline and respect, along with faith in God, contributed to their courage and bravery in facing life and death situations caused by the indigenous Niueans.

The acts of kindness and respect shown by the Samoan missionaries' towards the Niuean people contributed and influenced the Niueans to search for a home on the shores of Samoa. There were many factors which caused the Niueans to migrate to Samoa, such as financial gain, curiosity, the Gospel, and others as mentioned above. However, the first Niueans to set foot on Samoan soil were hardworking, determined, resourceful, and reliable people who were also looking to better their lives physically, mentally, and spiritually. The sacrifice those pioneering Niueans made for the betterment of

their families, villages, and country, were coming into fruition through the shared efforts by both Niueans and Samoans. A bond and relationship would immerge that went beyond friendship, but instead, would come to be known as a brotherhood formed in the Aai o Niue, which both Niueans and Samoans could call home.

Chapter 2: Church Establishment and Religious Ministers

2.1. The Beginning of the Community of Aai o Niue

The beginning of the church community of the Niuean people in Apia was not an easy task like any other development that needed to be done, especially with the Niuean people who were aliens in a foreigner land. The Niueans struggled at times and faced much discouragement not only from the locals, but their own people as well (Levi, 2016). Some were willing to assimilate and be part of the Samoan-Niuean Community while others wanted to be landowners, and claim to be a freehold land for themselves. It was impossible for the settlers of AON to fully own their land, since it had only been given to them as a courtesy by the chief of Apia Seumanutafa for them to live on, but not to own it. Although the Niueans were given a land to settle, but they still looked for other options to obtain a freehold land that could be truly owned by them (Matheson 1987, 66).

The AON community created a powerful governing body called the *tulafono*⁷, which made plans in order for them to seek freehold land. Members of the *tulafono* were elected to their position by the adult males or *tauleale'a* (untitled males over 14 years of age). The *tulafono* had a presiding officer who acted as village mayor, or headman, the *pulenu'u*.⁸ The *pulenu'u* was also responsible for collecting cash contributions from his people as gratuity to the *ali'i* Seumanutafa (Matheson 1987, 65-66). But those who wished for greater autonomy kept searching for a place or a way to find a freehold

⁷*Tulafono* are the elderly males who made decisions on behalf of the Niuean Community.

⁸*Pulenu'u* is a village mayor.

land. They initiated fundraising schemes in order to buy land from some alternative village sites (Salatielu, 2016).⁹ The growing population of Aai o Niue coupled with the restriction imposed by the Apia leadership that prevented the owning of land and building of stable houses, painted a picture of insecurity for those wishing to make Samoa their permanent place of abode. Despite these restrictions, the community of the Niuean people here in Samoa was nevertheless formed and established in Apia under the condition of friendly relations with the chief Seumanutafa and his family and the people of Apia. It was a spiritually grounded community that developed from a Christian mind set of the Niuean people (Seumanutafa, 2016).

The Gospel was the Niueans' only connection to the people of Samoa and their freedom to stay and have a relationship with the chief Seumanutafa (Seumanutafa, 2016). The Niueans had no biological connections or family relations with Seumanutafa and his family, but they were given a reliable and convenient place any foreigner could expect to settle permanently, without being forced to make any set amount of monetary payment. They were simply asked to show gratitude and cordiality to the chief for the kindness shown to them. Without the church's involvement it would have been difficult for the Niuean people to establish their community. Even though they did not have a specific place of worship but they affiliated with the Samoan people in Apia and had fellowship together at their worshipping place (Levi, 2016).

⁹Malaetolu Salatielu is a Niuean Religious Minister who graduated from Malua Theological College in 1968. He is also part Samoan and part Niuean, whose father being from Apia.

The villagers of Apia originally worshiped in a Samoan open house under *atamaligi* tree (Albizza or Ghinesis tree). This area of Apia where the tree stood is known as *Tamaligi* to this day, and is located at the John Williams Building, which currently houses the EFKS or CCCS central headquarters. A church building was established in Apia in 1892 and soon after, the Niuean settlers had separated from the Apia community and had formed their own fully Niuean church at their assigned place to settle, the Aai o Niue. One of the reasons why the Niueans formed their own church was due to the fact that they were not fully comfortable participating in the Apia church services, because of the language barrier and customary differences. Even though there are similarities between the two cultures, but the Niueans preferred their own language and wanted to conduct their own services. They were also misunderstood by the Samoan people in the way they pronounced their words and sang hymns (Salatielu, 2016).

2.2. Church Building and Development

Upon settlement, the Sunday services of the early AON parishioners were held in an open Samoan *fale* situated beside the road at Falealili Street, and continued to do so for about 40 years. In 1926 the parishioners, seeing that the *fale* was no longer able to accommodate their growing membership (Letter of Administration of Western Samoa, 1926) decided to erect a formal church building, and selected a site which contained an already existing cement coral lime building. It was difficult to generate the building permit because the site was only meters away from the main road. The Department of Lands and Survey objected to the proposal to build a new church, unless they could first send a surveyor to inspect and prepare a plan not only for the

relocation of the church, but also for the subsequent restructuring of the village around the church. The Department of Lands and Survey asked the *ali'i and faipule*¹⁰ of Aai o Niue to submit their proposal to Mr. Watson¹¹ who was the Surveyor at the time. Mr. Watson had to prepare a plan showing the new village location, with the church in a suitable position and not alongside the main road. The Department of Lands and Survey believed that having the Church alongside the road would affect the planning of future projects and developments of the village, a crucial consideration given the short distance of the settlement from the main town area.¹²

On the 26th of April 1955, the laying of the church's stone foundation was completed, and the church was officially opened 4 years later, on the 20th of August 1959. The settlers named it, '*O le Fale o le Alofa Tunoa o le Atua*', meaning the House of the Eternal Love of God (Fauolo 2005, 646). The church was located 50 meters inland on the eastern side of the main road, going up to Falealili Street. The late religious minister Rev Alesana Halanetau was an accomplished carpenter, and also led the construction of the church building during his third year as minister in the village (Levi, 2016).

In the year 2000, a new third church building was officially opened, built on the foundation of the old church. The only remaining part of the old building was the front side wall that they could not demolish because of its solid and rigid make up of coral lime. It was surprisingly the late Rev

¹⁰*Ali'i* and *Faipule* are Niuean chiefs who govern the Niuean people living in Samoa.

¹¹Watson was the Chief Surveyor for the Department of Survey in 1926.

¹²Memorandum from Administration of Western Samoa on 26th April 1926. Also see figure 3.2. on the map provided in the appendix.

Alesana's son in law carpenter Sulufaiga Malua Setu,¹³ who built the new church. The bulk of building materials used were procured and sent from Fiji by the carpenter Malua Setu and the AON church secretary treasurer at that time Asomua Iese Pouafe. Some materials for the church were purchased locally, while other materials were donated by various neighboring parishes (Pouafe, 2016; Setu, 2016).

2.3. Development of Church Services

The community had been established and the Niuean people were settled in this part of Apia (Aai o Niue) with freedom to worship. It was necessary for them to break away from the Apia community and the way that they conducted church services, but in the end it was a relief for them. The Niueans own services were able to be conducted with hymns sung in their own language and tunes (Fauolo 2005, 145). There were no instruments, musical director, or conductor used. The only musical accompaniment was the use of rocks that were struck together to guide the rhythm and tempo of the song. An appointed member would also use this method to identify the pitch or key of a hymn, to initiate the singing. Although their voices were not altogether tuned to a proper union and most of the time sounded flat, but it was still the sound of a people that worshipped God. So despite being off key, but as long as they were singing a hymn to worship the Lord, they were able to achieve their main goal (Tovia, 2016).

Church services continued to be held in the Niuean language up until the early 1960s. It was the language that unified the Niueans living around

¹³Sulufaiga Malua Setu was married to Mua the daughter of Alesana Halanetau.

the Apia area, and allowed them to engage in fellowship, to congregate and socialize as if they were back home. A *lali*¹⁴ was sounded and beaten to signal the time of service each Sunday, and the time for family evening worship on weekdays (Levi. 2016).

2.4. Religious Ministers and Time of Service

There were fourteen Niuean Religious Ministers involved in the development of the AON church for the last hundred years since its establishment. The AON Congregation had been able to make direct contact with the mother church in Niue, and requested for ministers to serve and to look after their congregation in Samoa. But when Rev Alesana, the last of the Niuean ministers, retired in 1975 the Niue Church could not provide a replacement for him due to the shortage of ministers of Niuean descent. Instead, the AON church was asked to submit a request for replacement to the EFKS. Rev Alesana was thereby the last full-blooded Niuean religious minister to serve the AON church. This period also marked the final chapter of the Niuean mother Church ever being involved in choosing a Religious Minister for the Aai o Niue Church, as that responsibility was handed over to the Samoan mother church, or EFKS (Penikua, 2016; Salatielu, 2016).

The first Niuean religious minister to serve the AON church was Rev Lasalo.¹⁵ He served for only a year (from 1866 to 1867), however, the exact dates of his services and what village of Niue he was from are unknown. The

¹⁴A *lali* is a large wooden drum used to inform the village of important events throughout the day, especially times of morning and evening worship services.

¹⁵There is a memorial stone with the list of church ministers who served the Aai o Niue church in the appendix. See figure 1.2.

following minister to serve was Rev Isaako and his wife Ana, from Alofi (1868 – 1870). After a couple of years he returned to Niue and continued to serve the church there. Isaako and Ana were one of the first Niuean Missionaries assigned to evangelize Papua New Guinean in 1874. Rev Milani, from the village of Toapa, served Aai o Niue for five years from 1871 to 1876 and was married to Mareta. After leaving the church he continued living in Apia until his untimely death in 1883 (Lisimoni-Togahai 2010, 31-32). He was succeeded by Rev Papani from Avatele (1877-1884), Rev Laheulu (1885 - 1896), Rev Makaea (who served for about five years and is believed to have been from Mutalau), Rev Magaoa of Toapa (1902 – 1904), and Rev Lukupa of Liku (1905 - 1912). Lukupa still has descendants in Aai o Niue, who continue their service of membership to the church. From 1913 to 1918 Togiafolo continued the mission before being replaced by his successor, Rev Kepu, who served from 1919 to 1929. Kepu was resident minister while the Department of Lands and Survey was working to reconstruct and relocate the church building. As minister, Kepu was known as a strict person who used severe disciplinary methods which eventually resulted in his being released by the congregation, whereupon he returned to Niue after taking Sabbatical leave. Kepu still has relatives who reside in Aai o Niue, but are not affiliated with the church (Penikiua, 2016). Kepu was followed by Rev Punimata Tanielu who served for 5 years (1930 to 1935) before leaving to become the pastor of the EFKS Vaipuna church in Apia, a church that he himself also founded. He was married to a Samoan woman from Moataa named Niuloa, and Moataa is where most of his family lives to this day. Agnes Pouafe, the wife of one of the former chairpersons of AON, is a

descendant of Punimata and is still affiliated with the AON church(Pouafe, 2016).

Rev Iafeta was the *faiifeau*(minister)that came after Punimata and served for four years, from 1936 to 1939. He was followed by Rev Pavihi of Avatele, Niue; Pavihi still has relatives in Samoa. His second marriage was to a woman from Nofolahi by the name of Tepa, who spent time with him during the mission at Aai o Niue. Pavihi served for twelve years from 1940 to 1952 before returning to Niue, where he died (Pavihi, 2016). Alesana Halanetau from Toapa, Niue came after Rev Pavihi.

Alesanahad previously served as a missionary in Papua New Guinea from 1949 to 1952 (his first Niuean wife, Tuitopa, died there) before coming to Samoa,where he took a second wife, Viivale of Fasitoo-tai,by way of an arranged marriage(Setu, 2016).Alesana became *faiifeau* of the AON church in 1953 (Fauolo 2005, 646), and it was under his leadership that the church reverted to the use of the Samoan language for their church services and hymns. A carpenter by trade in his earlier years, Alesana contributed immensely to the development of the AON community, and imparted his skills and knowledge to many youths of the village(Tariu, 2016). Rev. Alesana Halanetau was the longest serving Niuean *faiifeau*; he ministered for over 22 years from 1953 to 1975, before retiring at the age of seventy-five. The AON church members built a private home for him in the village behind the religious minister's residence. Alesana spent his remaining years at his home until he passed away on the 29th of January 1980, from a recurring illness that had seen him bedridden in the four years leading to his death. He

had left his wife Viivale and children to continue serving the AON, both the church and the village (Tariu, 2016).

Rev. Sulufaiga Samasoni succeeded Halanetau, and was the first EFKS Samoan *faifeau* to serve in AON. Originally from the village of Fusi Safotulafai in Savaii, he served for 27 years as minister from 1976 to 2003, the year he passed away (Samasoni, 1979). Like Alesana and Isaako before him, Sulufaiga had also served in PNG as a missionary prior to joining the AON church. Both he and his wife, Sisavaii of Matautu Lefaga, were still active in the ministry at the time of their deaths. Sulufaiga served as both Vice Chairman¹⁶ and Chairman of the EFKS over a 5 year period from 1999 to 2003. He passed away before completion of his third term.

On the 21st of August 2004, Rev Efu Efu and his wife Hana Osooso (see figure 4.1), became the ordained minister for the AON, and remain in service to this day. His wife is Hana Osooso from the village of Nofolii, and Rev Efu from Papauta, a village that is part of Apia, which is mainly owned by the Apia chief Seumanutafa. He is also a descendant of the Seumanutafa family on his mother's side, and of Niuean descent on his father's side. Rev Efu and his wife graduated from Malua Theological College in 1997 with a Diploma in Theology. Before he became the Minister of Religion of the AON EFKS, he managed the EFKS owned *Ia Malamalama* Bookshop¹⁷ for five years, from 1999 to 2004 (Efu, 2016).

¹⁶The Vice Chairman of the Congregation Christian of Samoa is voted by the General Conference every year at the end of every Conference. He will automatically become the Chairman by the following year at the end of the Conference.

¹⁷ *Ia Malamalama* means 'Let there be light' is a bookshop owned by the CCCS.

2.5. Critical Analysis

Over the period of its growth and development, the Aai o Niue church has encountered many struggles. Some religious ministers only served for one or two years and left, which could be seen as a sign that there were difficulties that impelled them to move on and continue elsewhere. Fortunately, some ministers managed to stand up to these issues and difficulties when they arose and remained in AON. The people of Aai o Niue managed to build a stable community over all these years, and still remain within the boundary that was given for them to live and establish a churchly community. Plans to erect a church building were initially opposed, and no doubt delayed due to many hindrances. But the church managed to complete the work, and this is a spiritual achievement that the parishioners still hold dear to their hearts today. The Aai o Niue has now become a center point for Niueans travelling to Samoa, as their home away from home. Lastly, it is important to note that the generation of native Niueans that founded the AON church, has since been replaced by half caste Niueans or full blooded Samoans, who make up the present day church. These Samoans came into the Niuean Settlement through intermarriage, and to find a closer place to the town area for employment and education. They are all living together in harmony and serving the Lord through the EFKS Aai o Niue.

CHAPTER 3: The Aai o Niue Church's Contribution to the Mission

3.1. Physical Contributions

Without the people there can be no church, and this is part of the mission of the Church - to gather the people to know about God and His will. Giving equal attention to both the physical and spiritual development of the people is essential, if the Church is to successfully preach the gospel about Jesus Christ the Son of God. The mission of the EFKS Church has contributed immensely to the lives of Niueans that have settled in Samoa over the years. It was the mission of the Church and the spreading of the Good News that determined the kindness of Chief of Apia Seumanutafa, and Samoan people in general, to welcome the Niuean people and make them feel at home (Seumanutafa, 2016).

The church mission was clearly successful in Aai o Niue village. The faith and loyalty of the parishioners, as well as their support for church development, have been key factors in the church's remarkable longevity. In turn, the contribution of the church to both the spiritual and physical prosperity of its members has not been undermined. It has laid the groundwork for the cultivation of an environment of morality, fellowship and respect – an environment that could easily have been diminished, or disrupted by urbanisation, modernity or other social agents, had the church not existed. Furthermore, because of the convenience of the church's location within Apia, its facilities have often been utilised by bodies within the Samoan

Church and government, as well as the Church of Niue, for the conducting of programs and functions.

Since its establishment, Aai o Niue has served as a gathering point for Niuean migrants. There remains a strong inherent link between Niueans and this community across the sea that was established by their forefathers. To this day Niuean government officials, ministers, athletes and other travelling persons take up lodging at Aai o Niue, when visiting Samoa to attend sporting events, conferences and reunions. ‘Aai o Niue’ is indeed therefore a village of and for the Niuean people, in every literal sense of the term; a second home, where Niueans are assured hospitality, and are assisted in every possible way by the local community (Tariu, 2016). On the 10th of June, 1896, the Church of Niue celebrated 50 years since the arrival of Christianity in Niue, at the EFKS Aai o Niue. The service for this occasion was led by Misi Tauati and was conducted in Samoan; however, the hymns were sung in Niuean (Fauolo 2005, 145).

3.1.1. Hosting Sports Contingence

As inferred above, Aai o Niue operates doubly as a games village for Niuean athletes that participate in regional sports gatherings. The regular selection of Aai o Niue by games committees as a host body is due to its central location and ties with Niue; and despite its smallness compared to the larger traditional villages, Aai o Niue makes up for it in hospitality and entertainment (Laupepa, 2016). The preparation of the traditional Sunday *toonai*¹⁸ is a cherished part of the community’s hosting repertoire. Key

¹⁸ *Toonai* is a Sunday lunch after church service.

hosting occasions include the 1998 South Pacific Games and the 2006 / 2007 Oceania-FIFA under 20 Women's Football World Championships (where Aai o Niue hosted both the Tongan and Niuean women's contingents).

3.1.2. Hosting Church Conference

The AON church and facilities are situated meters away from the EFKS main office at Tamaligi, and are often used by the main office for national level programs, as well as regional international church conferences. The church's working committees also use the AON premises for their meetings, as and when necessary. Particularly during Rev Sulufaiga Samasoni's tenure as EFKS Chairman, sessions of the Elders Committee would be held frequently at the premises (Tariu, 2016). It follows then that some of the most significant decisions to be made by the EFKS in its history as a church, were made at Aai o Niue. It was here that the matter of separation of the American Samoa branch of the church was discussed and resolved, via an emergency conference in July 1990 (Samasoni, 1990).¹⁹

Aai o Niue also had opportunity on several occasions to host members of the Council for World Mission, whilst in country for international consultations: CWM- Pacific Conference, November 1982; the following were invited to lead and take part in church services at Aai o Niue on 28 September - Reverend Albert Jo Burma, United Church of Papua New Guinea, and Mr Benjamin Tawaole, Solomon Islands (morning service); Reverend Sonny Riini, Reverend Nes Ripley and Mrs Judy Alison, New Zealand Presbyterian Church (evening service) (Samasoni, 1982).

¹⁹*Api ole Galuega*- Ministry Book by Rev Sulufaiga Samasoni.

The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the PCC (Pacific Council of Churches) on September 2011 at Malua Theological College, AON was one of the parishes that hosted some of the delegation for Sunday service and a *toonai*. Father Sileki Tonga from Tonga led the Sunday morning service on the 4th of September 2011 with the assistance of the representative from Fiji, Julie, who is part Fijian and part Chinese (Efu, 2011).

The CWM-Pacific Conference was held on July 2015; the following were invited to lead and participate in church services at Aai o Niue on 26 July – Reverend Feiloaiga Taulealea sumai Davies, Secretary of CWM Pacific, assisted by Mr Qalokisa, Solomon Islands Director of CWM Pacific, Mr Sudipda Singh, India; Program-Secretary of CWM Global Office, and Miss Neli Tamate, New Zealand youth delegate (Efu, 2015). The Main Office would often rely on AON church members being easy to reach, in the event of emergency or last minute meetings or ventures requiring the EFKS' attendance.

3.1.3. Hosting of Government Bodies and Village Communities

With its convenient location, the Aai o Niue church has also accommodated the services of government departments, as well as other village communities. In the 1960s the Government-owned radio broadcast station 2AB often recorded the AON Sunday services, which would be aired in the evenings.²⁰ This was due to frequent no-shows by churches scheduled to appear at the 2AP office, for the recording of their services, whereupon Aai o Niue was always a convenient replacement. The church building was also used by the Ministry of Justice to officiate public marriage ceremonies (Mose, 2016)²¹ (during Rev Alesana Halanetau's tenure), and by the Office of the Electoral Commission as a voting station booth for parliamentary elections. Recently, departments such as the Ministry of Health and Samoa Fire and Emergency Services have sought assistance of AON church ministers via conducting of services, to bless public projects. Other church communities have used the church building to record Sunday services and hymn songs, favouring the church's acoustics combined with its distance away from the traffic of the main road (Levi, 2016).²²

In 2003, AON hosted a delegation of the Church of Niue, who was raising funds for the construction of a multipurpose hall in Alofi (during this time the delegation also visited and stayed with the church at Vaipuna village, which also has Niuean ancestry). The venture was a success, and the AON church was invited to Niue to attend the official opening of the hall,

²⁰ 2AB is the only radio broadcasting station in Samoa.

²¹ Tino Mose married Lemafaoe in 1974. The service was conducted by Rev Alesana Halanetau.

²² Malagamalii Lavea Fosi Levi is the son of Lavea Levi who was the Radio Station 2AB Manager in the 1960's.

which was completed in 2006 in which Rev Efu Efu participated as the representative of the AON church. The AON also hosted the Miss Samoa contestants within their Sunday service and a *toonai* as well as during the 2012 Miss South Samoa Pageant (Efu, 2012).

The church premises were made into an evacuation zone when Cyclone Evan hit Samoa in December 2012. For 3 days parishioners and neighbouring families of Apia were sheltered within the church building and minister's house. Some youths and elder members of the AON church were able to retrieve elderly people and young children in peril, and relocate them to the church building, literally saving their lives from the onslaught of the cyclone. The high foundation level of the church building prevented floodwater from breaching; the two storey structure of the minister's residence also offered ample space as well as safety. AON church members took care of the cyclone victims, providing food and supplies for the duration of their time in the shelter.

3.2. Financial Contributions

Over the years the AON church has striven to demonstrate its Christian faith, and has done so to a great extent, most particularly in offerings, sharing of fruits of labour and helping the needy. For the past 12 years the AON church has made annual contributions of more than WST\$20,000 for the *Taulaga*²³ (a Samoa church offering that is made annually to the EFKS main office for its day to day operations), and more than WST\$2,000 each for the

²³*Taulaga* is a yearly donation that the parishioners donate on their free will. The EFKS has four kinds of taulaga, the *Taulaga Samoa*, *Taulaga Tala Lelei*, *Taulaga Auleoleo* and *Taulaga Autaumafai*.

Taulaga Talalelei (Good News offering / Missionary offering) and the *Taulaga Auleoleo* (Christian Endeavour offering).

In 2009, AON raised funds to the amount of WST\$10,000 and donated it to assist victims of a tsunami that hit the eastern side of Upolu Island that year. The church has also regularly assisted fundraising initiatives of other fellow Samoan churches (raffles, walkathons, etc).

3.3. Spiritual

The AON community's general take on life remains one of satisfaction and optimism, with the church considered the driving factor in keeping the community intact, and firm in their faith in God.

The Niuean language was well survived when the Church Services were still conducted in the Niuean language. The Spiritual life of the Niueans was also depending on the maintaining of their language to carry out their services. But due to the growth in number of the Samoan people in the Church, was one of the reasons for them to sacrifice their mother tongue and continue on to use the Samoan language during Church services (Setu, 2016).²⁴ It is this commitment to the Christian faith that is believed to have over the years ensured a steady harvest of spiritual workers from AON for the EFKS – most joining the field (missionaries, ministers, lay preachers, deacons), with others in education, and others in administration (chairmanship, directors, chief executives).

²⁴ Mua is the daughter of Rev Alesana Halanetau the minister that introduced the Samoan service.

The following graduates of Malua Theological College all have origins and ties in Aai o Niue, and are noted here for their endeavours in Christian ministry: Rev Tafesilafai Faafetai Lagisii (1978 to 1981), served as minister to CCCS Lepea. Rev Faitoaga Tolua (1985 to 1988), served as minister to CCCS Fugalei and Vailima, going on to become manager of the Malua Printing press and then later Director of the CCCS Youth Mission. Rev Etisone Gafa (1986 to 1989), served as a missionary in Jamaica, and minister to CCCS Mt Roskill, Auckland (NZ), and now currently serves at CCCS Lalomanu, one of the largest churches on the eastern side of Upolu. Rev Elder Tinetali Gafa (younger brother of Etisone, 1995-1998), currently an Elder minister serving CCCS Kalihi Hawaii (Api o le Galuega: Samasoni, 1978; Samasoni, 1985; Samasoni 1986; Samasoni, 1995.). Rev Karanita Petaia (2010-2014), holds a Master's degree in Theology from the Pacific Theological College (Suva, Fiji), previously a Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee and deacon for AON Church, now a lecturer at the Malua Theological College. Rev. Epati Sooula (2012-2015), currently an assistant ordained minister for Aai o Niue, and teacher at Maluafou College, a CCCS funded mission school.

Other descendants of the Aai o Niue community were either: 1) raised in CCCS churches overseas, but ended up joining EFKS just the same, or; 2) joined the church through affiliation by marriage. Rev Elder Tanielu Lemamea married to Feu daughter of Toni Hiku a descendant of Niue, is currently serving at the CCCS Otara Auckland New Zealand. Rev Togafiti Tuaoimaalii (Grey Lynn, Auckland (NZ), graduated from Malua and became minister at CCCS Mt Eden, Auckland (NZ). Gese Leiataua married Rev Afa

Talagi, currently serving at the CCCS Napier, Waikato (NZ). Lina Catherine married Rev Viliamu Chang Foo, a former lecturer at Malua, currently serving at CCCS Christchurch New Zealand.

Through the EFKS General Assembly (which is held in May every year) the AON church has been able to participate in decision making processes for the spiritual advancement of the church, and exert positive influence on key issues. One such issue was the Samoan translation of the ‘Words for Today’²⁵ booklet – a translation that AON feared was limited in scope and interpretation. AON therefore petitioned through the Assembly that the EFKS Main Office might consider incorporating the original English themes into the Samoan booklet, to give church members freedom to grasp for themselves the application and meaning behind Bible verses, as originally intended by the IBRA.²⁶ In 2013 the AON church also asked the Assembly to consider development of a Strategic Plan for construction of a new EFKS Church.

3.4. Critical Analysis

Aai o Niue covers 10,000 square meters of land (5,000 is used for settlement, the other 5,000 as the church premises). It is no small wonder that such a minute community could produce such a considerable number of Christian workers to serve, inspire and lead the church, and continues to bring forth leaders and role models for present generations. Dr Vaasilifiti Asaua, (AON church Chairperson, 1996-2007) always spoke proudly of the

²⁵The ‘Words for Today’ translated to *Tusi Faitau Aso*.

²⁶ General Assembly Conference 2013.

achievements of the members of the community, and kept close to heart a saying that he felt best captured the heart and spirit of AON: *‘Ierusalemale nei, e tupito oe ma faatauva’a, ae ua fai oe ma nuu filifilia o le Atua’*- O Jerusalem, although you are unworthy but you have been a chosen city of God.

CHAPTER 4: Conclusion

4.1. Major Achievements of AON Parishioners

Many Samoan locals became part of the AON church and community through intermarriage and urbanisation. In the case of the latter, the need for boarding to accommodate employment and school obligations, were key factors, although Samoans were also able to acquire nearby lands by lease. Many of the Samoans who joined AON eventually left with their families upon securing decent salaries, to buy properties elsewhere within the urban area. Others migrated to seek opportunities for their families overseas, and these included the Niuean settlers, who wanted to capitalise opportunities for legal New Zealand / Australian citizenship. All this has meant visible fluctuations in church membership from time to time.

Many who had their upbringing in AON, or married into the community, have gone on to become successful figures in both public and private sectors. Some have served as firm owners / managers, as chief executives, and as cabinet ministers. The following persons first noted here is full-blood Samoan with their achievements. Afioga Tuiloma Pule Lameko, and his good lady Melini, was one of Samoa's longest serving parliament members. Tuiloma and his family was one of the first Samoan settlers within AON. He earned his title *a'oa'o fesoasoani* (lay preacher) from the AON church and became a chairperson before re-settling Alafua with his family, a village in the nearby Apia town area. During his time in parliament, Tuiloma served as Minister of Revenue, among other positions. In 2016 he retired from politics and was appointed as a Deputy Head of State (Lameko, 2016). His children who have

spent their young lives in the AON Sunday school *Aoga Faifeau* (minister school) have become successful accountants, and operate their own accounting firm called Lameko Accountant. One of his daughters Maryanna Lameko is the CEO of the Bank of South Pacific, and the other daughter Taituuga Esther Lameko was the CEO of the Samoa National Provident Fund (NPF). Lameko's other son Vui Lance Lameko was the Finance manager of the Electric Power Cooperation (EPC).

Tunufai Lautalatoa Kurene was one of the Samoan migrant families that acquired land next to the AON settlement, but served the AON church. At 87 years old, Tunufai still currently serves the church in the capacity of elder deacon. A well-known businessman, Tunufai's company, TL Endermann Construction, was responsible for reconstructing the Apia wharf and seawall and bringing them to their current state. Other works include the National University of Samoa, the Accident Compensation Corporation Building, and the *Pulega Apia* house at the Malua Theological College, which is one of the oldest and longest surviving houses within the compound to date. Included among the company's private projects is a renovation of the AON minister's residence. Fiu Kurene Endermann the son of Tunufai and owner of Rendezvous Restaurant at Maluafou right next to AON is currently serving the AON church (Endermann, 2016).

Dr Vaasilifiti Asaua a lay preacher and a former Chairperson of the AON church serves as the only Pathology and Forensic Doctor in Samoa. Following in his footsteps were his two daughters Mafu and Silaulelei who spent all their young lives in Sunday school and *Aoga faifeau* (minister's school) and became

doctors themselves and run their own private medical clinic called Asaua Clinic(Asaua, 2016).

Aiafi and Mele were one of the deacons of the church who raised their children within the AON community, attending Sunday school and minister school during the time of Rev Alesana Halanetau who baptised his children. They have become as successful as Lealailepule Rimoni who became a Member of Parliament, and Matafeo Tanielu, who was the CEO of Education Department and many other executive positions. The children always speak highly of their upbringing within the AON church community and accredit most of their success to the work and mission of the Aai o Niue church and village (Aiafi,2016).

Alaalatoa and Nive were some of the Samoans who married into the community and cherished their time as being a part of the AON community. Alaalatoa once became a deacon, secretary and choir master within the church. All their children have been raised in the AON community. Two of Alaalatoa's sons were chosen to play on the Samoan National Rugby team, also known as the Manu Samoa. Alopule Roketi Alaalatoa (current choir master) and Rosalia Alaalatoa Filipino and their children are still active members of the church who continue the legacy of their parents as members of the AON community (Filipo, 2016).

Lafi and IulietaEsera were other successful AON members, Lafi was a doctor, and joined the church to serve as a deacon of the church and a lay preacher. All their children were raised in the church and the village community of AON. Some of Lafi's children were under the care of Rev Alesana and Vi'i during their time of service in the AON through the

Samoan tradition adoptions (*vaetama*)²⁷. Afemaleta Alesana Lafi a current deacon and secretary of the AON church were one of those who were nurtured by Alesana and Vi'i when he was a child. He was an ACEO of the Development Bank of Samoa for some years before he became the manager of the John Williams Building, which is owned by the CCCS (Levi, 2016).

Taliau Tinetalu and Luaipou Gafa were other Samoans that acquired land next to the AON community and joined the church. Taliau became a chairperson of the AON church, lay preacher and choir master. All their children were part of the Sunday school, minister's school and baptised in the AON church. Most of their children have gone into the God's ministry, such as Rev Elder Tinetalu Gafa, Rev Etisone Gafa, Pastor Gafa Gafa and Pastor Ropeta. Matautia Rula Levi, another child of Taliau, became the CEO of the Samoa Housing Cooperation, still serving the AON with her husband Malagamalii Fosi Levi (Levi, 2016).

Faumuina and Leagatonu Esera were probably the most prosperous and growing Samoan family currently serving the AON church. There are three *matafale* (church family) from the Esera lineage who served in the church community. Rev Epati and Vickie Sooula are assistant ministers for the AON church. Rev Epati is the grandson of Faumuina. Faavale is Faumuina's daughter and serves as a deacon with her husband. Tofi and Namulauulu Lupe are Esera's other children who continue the *matafale* in the AON church and participate in all church activities with their children (Sooula, 2016).

Peti is one of the first original Niuean settlers of the AON who has a descendant that is currently serving the village. Taue is Peti's son who is

²⁷ Samoa's way of adoption without any legal paper through court.

married to Faasau, they became *pulenuu* (governor of the village). Taue and Faasau have three children, Pegu the son, and their daughters' Faasau and Aitaua who are currently serving the AON community.

Foumalo Leiatua, an AON resident and Niuean by descent from the line of Faasau's family, continually reside and serve the AON community. Foumalo is married to Afioga Tolofuaivalelei Falemoe Leiatua (current lay preacher), who served as a member of the Parliament for three consecutive terms;²⁸ during this time he was Speaker of the House, Minister of Women, and Community and Social Department. Prior to his parliamentary career, he held the executive office at the Department of Labour, amongst other positions (Leiatua, 2016).

Ms. Aitua married Rev Salasopa Enari who were the religious minister of the EFKS Utalii and retired to AON when Salasopa passed away and continued to serve the church and the community. Salasopa Junior Enari and Soti Enari are two of Enari's sons, and served in the ministry as religious ministers. Pativaine the daughter of Aitua married Toleafoa Uelese Petaia, who was the lay preacher of the AON church and have children who continuously serve the AON. Pativaine Enari Tevita is from the line of the Aitua family and was raised in AON. Pativaine has served as Finance Manager for the Samoa Tourism Authority for the past 12 years, and runs a small loans firm called Reita Events; which employs several AON members. Pativaine's husband, Alii malemanu Sasa Eric Tevita, is co-owner of AST Electrical Supplies, a prominent warehouse supplier in the Apia town

²⁸ A Member of Parliament in the government of Samoa will take 5 years per term.

area. Some of these members, such as Sulufaiga and Pativaine, were able to employ members of the AON parish in their firms.

Ani, the full-blood Niuean, had a daughter named Ita, who married Lavea Levi, the former Manager of the Samoa Radio Station 2AB. They have children currently serving the AON church. Malagamalii Fosi Levi was a chairperson and a current deacon who served as a Land and Titles Court judge. Fosi's wife, Matautia Rula Levi, currently serves as Chief Executive Officer of the Samoa Housing Cooperation as mentioned. One of Levi's sons Lia'i'ifaiva Imo Levi is well known with the Samoan *tatau*²⁹ tattooing tradition. Mulitalo Vanda, daughter of Afiafi, is one of Ita's daughter who serves with her husband Tuioti Utu as deacons of the church. Sua Mulitalo Suapi, a relative of Malagamalii, is married to Fuatino Kofe, is a Niuean descendant and a retired lay preacher for the AON church who used to serve as an Instructor for the Land and Titles Court. One of Sua's grandchildren became a medical doctor in the Samoa National Hospital, Tupua Tamasese Meaole Hospital (TTMH) (Levi, 2016).

Matau and Tauveve were of Niuean descent, and served as deacons of the church. They raised their children within the church protocol and became successful in society. The eldest son of Matau, Sonny Schuster, was the former Police Commissioner of the Samoa Police Department. His son Lefau Harry Schuster was the former Attorney General in the Court of Law in Samoa. He became a Judge of the court of Samoa and decided to run as Member of Parliament, in which he won, and eventually became a Member of Parliament from 2011 to 2016. His brother Leota Raymond Schuster runs

²⁹*Tatau* is the Samoan tattooing traditions that called *pe'a* in general language.

Barrister Solicitorfirm. Matau's other son Aleki and his wife Tai, are the only members of the family who still takes part and serves the AON church community as a deacon of the church (Schuster, 2016).

Seve Keilani Soloi is the current Chairman of the AON church. Seve runs a land surveying company called Soloi Surveys. He is married to Siline, the daughter of Rev Alesana Halanetau. Sulufaiga Malua Setu is the current Vice Chairman of the AON Executive Committee, and is also married to Mua, another daughter of Rev Alesana Halanetau. Mua is the longest standing employee of the Pacific Commercial Bank (PCB) that later became the Westpac Bank, and is now the Bank of South Pacific (BSP); Sulufaiga owns Malua Setu Constructions, a construction and carpentry company who constructed the two-story minister's residence and church fellowship hall. Among other well-known construction projects in Samoa, was the CCCS Women Fellowship Building at the Malua Theological College compound, and several other residential houses and church buildings (Efu, 2016).

Within the 12 years that I have served as minister for AON, there has not been one year without at least one child from AON being awarded a study scholarship overseas and in universities in Samoa. Many students eventually find careers with the Samoan government, or Samoa's development partners (such as NUS/ New Zealand / Australia/Fiji/Vanuatu/China). This trend speaks volumes of the hard work, dedication, careful discipline and prayers imparted on the church's young by their parents and families. For children who embark on further tertiary studies, a special service is conducted to seek God's safety and protection whilst away, and to call the children to their duty and privilege as ambassadors, to represent the AON church and

community in their different pursuits. With the expectation that upon returning to the village, they will bring uplifting and good repute, and opportunities for the village to grow and prosper further. This is a practice that has undoubtedly been instilled within the community since the days of its ancestry.

4.2. Benefits for the Church Today

As mentioned earlier, there remains a strong connection between Niueans and the Aai o Niue community in Samoa. The AON church recognised early on that its survival would depend greatly on their upholding of this link, and this has continued to the present day.

There was great happiness and emotion during the celebration of AON's 150th anniversary; it was the first time for many invited guests from Niue to meet fellow Niueans who now call Samoa home. The anniversary service was led by the *Faifeau Toeaina* (Elder Minister) of the *Pulega Apia* (Apia District) Rev Elder Utufua Naseri. The main speech was delivered by the President of the Church of Niue Rev Viviani. And the guest speaker was the Chairman of the CCCS Rev Elder Tautiaga Senara. A brief summary of the history of the AON was presented by Rev Efu Efu, the current minister of the AON church. The celebration went on for three days on the 24th to 26th of November 2016, and concluded with the Sunday service led by the Executive offices of the Church of Niue; (President) Rev Vilikamupala Viviani, (Secretary) Nukanuka Tauevihi Tokoua and (Treasurer) Rev Petesa. The service was followed by a lavish *toonai* and normal customary traditions such as the ava ceremony and gift exchange. The Niueans took advantage of their being in Samoa, working together with the AON residents to trace their common roots back to the

forefathers who left Niue centuries ago.³⁰ This act of rediscovery is encapsulated in a popular Samoan saying, '*O le tagata ma lona faasinomaga, o le tagata ma lona tupuaga, o le fanua ma le tauafanua*', roughly translated as, 'A person cannot find peace unless he knows his identity, his ancestry, and his family origin'. There has always been this important connection that needed to be maintained within the Niuean people and their Samoan families.

The urbanization moment crowded the town areas with people leaving their village lives, where most citizens received good discipline and traditional customs and practices from the *matai* system or *pulega faamatai* (govern by chiefs). But coming to the Apia town area, such as AON, with minimal *matai* system, the AON church and community provided strong discipline and maintained customary traditions to govern and maintain order. The Aai o Niue accommodated children that left their families and were part of 'street kids' mentality and demeanour. Due to the AON being near the Apia seawall, some youths were attracted to the AON church and were able to join as members of the Sunday school, youth, and other divisions of the church.

4.3. Managerial

The AON Church Steering Committee is presided over by the minister, chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary or treasurer. Other various committees exist within the church, namely the Women's Fellowship, Youth Group, Choir and Sunday school. Sunday morning services start at 9 am, with evening services at 5pm, followed by the Youth group's programme. On weekdays, the community bell is sounded at 7pm to signify curfew and

³⁰ Charlie Tohovaka a delegates from Niue during the 150 celebration whose grandfather travel here in Samoa and never return and died but wanted to find where he was buried.

faigalotu, or family evening services for *faigalotu*. The Women's Fellowship holds its own services on the last Tuesday of the month; the minister's wife and wives of lay preachers lead these services, providing scripture readings and words of encouragement. Watchers' prayer unions are held every Saturday morning at 6am, to thank God for his constant protection throughout the week, and to seek his blessing and guidance. On the evening of every first Sunday of the month, Christian Endeavour services are held where the church is divided amongst its 4 main committees / groups (as listed above), and spiritual topics are provided for discussion and the sharing of views. Meetings of the larger church congregation are held every 3 months, and led by the Chairman. These meetings are to discuss development of physical aspects of the Church and to update the parishioners on the church's financial situation. Another congregational meeting (*filifiliga*) is held every third Sunday immediately after the morning service, and is led by the minister. This meeting is to discuss the spiritual development of the church. On the beginning of every year during the first four months of the year was the *aoga faifeau* (ministers' school) learning multiplication by heart, simple theology of the church doctrines, bible stories and especially manner discipline.

Every Sunday the congregation collects a freewill pledge that is donated as financial support for the minister. A second freewill collection known as the '*loto malie*' is made, to cover general financial obligations of the church, offset church maintenance costs (electricity, water), or to address any other needs within the church. AON, together with all other parishes, prepares an annual

offering to the church known as the *Taulaga Samoa*³¹ which is collected by the EFKS main office near the end of the year. Other annual offerings include the *Taulaga o le Tala Lelei* (Missionary Offering / Good News Offering), *Taulaga Au Leoleo*³² (Watchers Prayer Union Offering) and *Taulaga Au Taumafai*³³ (Christian Endeavour Offering).

4.4. Theological

Although the challenges and struggles that led to the formation of the AON church community were difficult experiences for those involved, it served as a momentous moment in the history of Christianity in Niue and in Samoa. Prior to the formation of AON, all churches in Samoa were ministered by foreign missionaries but the AON church community was ministered by their own Niuean minister. There were only a minority of Niueans at that time of the AON church formation and it must not have been easy, but their faith in God ensured the people from Niue that they were here to stay in Samoa and worship God in their own language.

The seed of the gospel has been planted from only a small minority of Niueans who have grown to become a greater and grander community. And out of such a trivial AON community arose some of those that became successful in government and private sectors and the missionary field. We can only imagine how the Spirit of God works within the lives of his people; Samoa were responsible for taking the gospel to Niue, but yet the Niueans are the ones now who are spreading the gospel throughout Samoa and other parts

³¹*Taulaga Samoa* is the free will offering donated at any time, but the final collection is held at the end of the year. This donation goes to the mother church EFKS for ministry operation.

³²*Taulaga Auleoleo* offering goes to the Watchers Prayer Union Committee for their operation.

³³*Taulaga Autaumafai* offering goes to the Christian Endeavour Committee for their operation.

of the world. It is now the fulfilment of Jesus' call to his disciples to go out to all nations, and make disciples and spread the good news of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The history of Aai o Niue and their journey reflects the journey of the nation of the people of God from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. They came out of the darkness as savages, and were shown the light of God by his faithful people. The light that they embraced never diminished or was hidden under a basket. Instead, the Niueans put it on a lamp stand to continue to shine for others to receive the good news and become good citizens of the AON.

The AON community was formed especially for the Niuean migrants to settle in a place that although in Samoan soil and called the *Usoalii o Semanutafa*, it became a home away from home. The Aai o Niue became a safe haven not only for Niueans, but also for the Samoans from the rural areas who migrated to the Apia town area during the urbanization moment. The AON church was now a settler's church catering for those who were seeking for a better future and to accommodate their spiritual faith in God.

Appendix

List of *Matafale* and *Aiga Lotuof* CCCS Aai o Niue (Current Families in AON church)

- 1- Faasau – Tolofua and Fomalofua Leiatua (lay preacher) and family are descendants of Niue.
- 2- Aitua – Aliimalemanu Eric and Pativaine Tevita (treasurer) and family are descendants of Niue.
- 3- Lauiula and Apiseka Sua and family are of Samoa descent (deacon).
- 4- Sua Suapi is a retired lay preacher, and their family are Niuean descendants.
- 5- Lui and Julie and family are descendants of Niue.
- 6- Alesana: Sulufaiga Malua (Vice Chairman) and Mua Setu and family are descendants of Niue (deacon).
- 7- Hiku: Migi Hiku, Matau and Tane and family are descendants of Niue (deacon).
- 8- Ani Isaako and Lina Tariu (deacon), Itua Jimmy and Imele Toala (lay preacher) and family are of Samoa descent.
- 9- Lavea Malagamalii and Matautia Rula Levi (deacon) and family are descendants of Niue.
- 10- Lautalatoa: Fiu Kurene and Selma and family are Samoan descendants.
- 11- Utai: Tepora and children are Samoan descendants.
- 12- Mano family are Samoan descendants.
- 13- Afemaleta Alesana (deacon, secretary) and family are of Samoan descent.
- 14- Esera Namulauulu and Tofi Esera and family are Samoan descendants.
- 15- Rev Epati and Vickie Sooula (assistance minister) are Samoan descendants.
- 16- Faavale (deacon) and Saili Leota are of Samoan descent.

- 17- Aleki and Tai Schuster (deacon) and family are Niuean descendants.
- 18- Tuioti Utu and Mulitalo Vanda (deacon) and family are Niuean descendants.
- 19- Alaalatoa:Alopule Roketi (deacon), Rosie and Sila Fuiava and family are Samoan descendants.
- 20- Seve Keilani and Siline Soloi (deacon, chairman) and family are descendants of Niue.
- 21- Pouafe: Agness and family are Niuean descendants.
- 22- Lilia Tiatia and family are Niuean descendants.
- 23- Susana and her children are of Samoan descent (*matafale fesoasoani*).
- 24- Siaumau and Lisi are Samoan descendants (*matafale fesoasoani*).
- 25- Sitivi family is of Niuean descent (*matafale fesoasoani*).
- 26- Siliga Pihigia and Sophie Alesana (deacon) and child are Niuean descendants (*matafale fesoasoani*).
- 27- Gugufolau and family are Niuean descendants (*matafale fesoasoani*).

Figure 1.1.



Figure 1.2.



The monument stone on the left is for the celebration of the hundred year anniversary since the establishment of the Church. The stone consists of the names of the Religious Ministers who served within the hundred year period.

Figure 2.1.



This cake was to celebrate and commemorate the 150th anniversary since the founding of the Aai o Niue EFKS church.

Figure 2.2.



This is the current minister's residence of Aai o Niue, which was re-modelled also as a part of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary.

Figure 3.1.



This is an old picture of the first church building of the Aai o Niue church.

Figure 3.2.



This is a map and layout of the Aai o Niue village is located in the Apia town area. The map consists of various buildings, the church (Falea), the minister's residence (Maota Faafegaiga) and family dwellings.

Figure 4.1.



Rev Efu Efu and wife Hana Osooso Efu current Religious Minister.

Glossary

2AB	Radio Station
A'oa'o fesoasoani	lay preacher
Aiga Lotu	church family
Aiga potopoto	extended family
Aoga faifeau	minister school
Auleoleo	Watchers' Prayer Union
Autaumafai	Christian Endeavour
Ava	welcoming ceremony; traditional Samoan drink
Faasamoa	Samoan way or culture
Faifeau	Religious minister
Faipule	mayor
Fale	house
Fale samoa	samoan house
Fesoasoani	assistance
Fono	meeting
Loto malie	freewill
Matafale	church family
Matai	chief
Misi	missionary
Pulega	district
Talā	dollar
Talalelei	good news
Tamaligi	Albizza tree
Tatau/pe'a	tattoo

Taulaga	offering
Toeaina	elder
Toonai	Sunday lunch
Tulafono	governing body/village mayor
Vaetama	adoption

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