

**AU USO FEALOFANI – SAMOA METHODIST WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP
UNIT REPORT
2018 – WEAVING TOGETHER MEETING**



Seti Lafai (President of Au Uso Fealofani)

INTRODUCTION

The theme of the Seminar: **‘Chosen People: Called to Proclaim’** demands that we continually reflect on our faith journey, as chosen people called to follow Christ and to make Him known. This theme speaks to my situation of not feeling equipped as the chosen one to represent our leaders. However, it is in this feeling of unworthiness that I am called to be equipped.

THE STATE OF THE AU USO FEALOFANI: The Au Uso Fealofani consists of married and single women over the age of 20. According to the Au Uso census last year (2017), the total number of members is around 6,174. These members are from the 17 synods of the Methodist Church in Samoa (MCS). The leader of the organisation is the wife of the President of the MCS. Each of the 17 synods has its own leader, the wives of the Superintendent ministers of the synods. These women leaders are all under the leadership of the wife of the President of the MCS. The leadership of women is determined by the leadership role of men. The Au Uso Fealofani has its own conference, manages its own finances and makes its own decisions. It develops its programmes to enhance the participation and spirituality of its members. It is within this context that we are chosen and called to proclaim Christ.

Worship: Apart from usual church services on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, the Au Uso Fealofani holds its own special worship services in March, June and October. These worship gatherings are connected to issues affecting the wellbeing of women in Samoa and around the world. For example, this has included the issue of gender-based violence that has had a damaging effect on the holistic development of women. As part of worship and Au Uso Fealofani’s programmes, bible studies are conducted within each women’s fellowship and synod as part of empowering women’s spirituality and enhancing their participation in their own development.

Relationships: Special relationships are formed between the Au Uso Fealofani and other ecumenical women’s groups. In this fellowship, the Au Uso Fealofani participates in ecumenical worship and discussions. At present, the leader of the Au Uso Fealofani is the President of the Women’s Ecumenical Fellowship. This group holds services every month, where they discuss issues to empower women in their ministry in the church and in secular society. Special relationships are

also formed with Samoa's Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. This offers opportunities for members (or whoever is representing the Au Uso Fealofani) to be informed about the issues discussed, and share with other members, especially about problems that prevent equal opportunities between women and men in all areas of church and society. The reality in Samoa is that secular society is more advanced, in granting equal opportunities for women than the church. However, the church is slowly catching up in granting women opportunities in areas presumed to be male domains only. An achievement has been noted in a woman being officially inducted and recognised as a female lecturer in a mainline church theological school. This is a positive response to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals!

THEOLOGY IN THE SAMOAN PUBLIC SQUARE

These are ways in which we enact our theology in the Samoan public square. Financial contribution is presented every year to National Kidney Foundation, due to an increasing number of Samoans depending on this service. Health education is also part of the Au Uso Fealofani's annual programme, to raise women's awareness regarding the importance of eating healthy and living a healthy lifestyle. A Charity fund is part of the Au Uso Fealofani's mission work. This assistance is given to women suffering from prolonged sickness. Gifts and money are also donated to non-government organisations, to support victims of domestic violence. The Au Uso grants scholarships to finance the education of children and mature students. This has contributed to the achievement of one of the Millennium Development Goals promoting the education of women and children.

Physical Developments: The Au Uso Fealofani has contributed greatly to the building of new structures, such as housing for students at the Methodist Theological School, and the continued renovation and maintenance of Au Uso Fealofani Hall.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Seminars are held regularly to upgrade the skills and knowledge of leaders. This involves annual retreats for female and male leaders to reflect on ways to improve their partnership in ministry. This is done with the hope that leaders would use their knowledge and skills to equip the future generations of leaders. This development goes hand in hand with spiritual nurturing through worship, developing healthy relationships, and the ongoing practice of Christ-like values. A special programme was started last year to mentor young women in the MCS. This initiative is crucial to the *empowerment of young women*, as future leaders and mentors for the younger generations.

RECOMMENDATION:

Initiatives and programmes should cater for the holistic needs and wellbeing of women in all walks of life.

In Christ,



Dr Mercy Ah Siu Maliko
(For Unit Leader)