

**REPORT OF STUDY LEAVE UNDERTAKEN
BY THE REV. TALOSAGA SU'A
May, 2011, and some follow-up on his brief, verbal report.**

**PACIFIC ISLAND YOUTH TODAY
Questions some are asking**

The Rev. Talosaga Su'a was Minister at Mt Albert Presbyterian Church, Auckland.

He had been suffering from serious cancer from 2010 but was able to undertake Study Leave in May, 2011. Some of what he found out was reported briefly and verbally to me, as his Confidante, but there is no record that it was written up. He died on January 2nd, 2012. I felt that what he had told me was of importance and I should take it a little further in honour of him.

I reported on his Study Leave when the Knox Centre for Ministry in Dunedin asked for reports. I outlined as above that there was only the verbal report to me. When I wrote that I was planning to take those findings a little further I was encouraged to do so and to send any reports to them so that others might be encouraged to take the work further still and make the needs revealed known more widely.

What I have been able to do is limited – partly because of my age and restricted mobility but also because I have restricted it to Samoan Presbyterian young people - and I am Palagi.

(The Very Rev. Margaret Martin – National Coordinator Christian Research Association 1990-2002)

The findings reported briefly and verbally to me:

Talosaga made the report to me that he had found young Pacific Islanders were different from the young people researched in the 1990s by Jemaima Tiatia and published in her book “Caught between Cultures” (by the Christian Research Association). She had made the point that Pacific Islander parents who had emigrated to New Zealand wanted to keep their Church Values and their Family Values, the two reinforced each other. Their children attended Schools where they were introduced to the wider world and different rules and values. Many felt constrained by this tension and wanted to break away and try something else - like a different kind of church, trying out, say, Charismatic Churches.

But the younger youth were not like that, Talosaga found. They wanted to ask questions:

- * *Why did our grandparents/parents leave the Islands and come to New Zealand?*
- * *Why did they link up with a church when they came?*
- * *What was the first church they attended like? E.g. Newton Pacific Island Church, Edinburgh Street, Auckland?*
- * *What did the churches they belonged to in the Islands teach?*
- * *Why was it all so important to their forebears?*

First, I found it is quite usual for immigrants to different countries (Generation 1) to find their children (Generation 2) want to do things differently and for Generation 3 to ask questions about their heritage.

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Why did Samoans come to New Zealand?

- Some came because there would be better educational opportunities for their family
- Some to seek better health and perhaps medical care not available in the Islands
- Some to make more money, with better job opportunities
- Some because other family had come earlier

But it wasn't always easy when they first came. Accommodation was difficult to find and at prices they could afford. Many families were crowded into small flats, maybe with only one room for living and sleeping, maybe even leaking.

Work wasn't always easy to find. They might lack the job skills needed or work was too far away and they couldn't afford the transport costs. Or there weren't any jobs available at all.

When they found jobs and better accommodation there was a demand to send money back to family in Samoa to help them cope better.

So with all these pressures what did they do? Sometimes the church was the only place that felt like home and where they felt support. (See later)

What was the Christian message that was brought to Samoa by the London Missionary Society missionaries back in the early 19th century?

Rev. Dr Bruce Deverell, a Palagi NZ Congregationalist, trained for the ministry at the Congregational Theological College when it opened and then went as an LMS missionary to Samoa, serving from 1958-66 in the village of Avao with wife, Gwen. He wrote:

Missionaries from Great Britain began coming to Pacific Islands in the early Nineteenth Century. They came from different churches but some grouped together as the London Missionary Society, often called LMS. They were keen to communicate the Christian message, as they understood it at the time. They had decided not to bring

the Church government of any one of their churches. That was left to the Islanders to develop.

Before they could start to share their message the Missionaries had to sit down with Pacific Islanders in whatever Island they went to and learn the language. But as they sat and learned to speak they watched and began to learn the culture.

They brought God, the Bible, the Church and schools, Lotu with Sunday and the seven-day-week, and rules for living good lives.

‘From the Western world, the original evangelical theology of the first missionaries is planted deep in village churches. The original call to move from darkness to light by way of personal conversion and public and community renunciation of pagan rituals, idols and gods, to embrace the new way by learning to read the printed Word, to assemble to sing and pray and hear the Word every seven days, and go to school and get involved in new economic activity to make money for offerings, led to a transformation of society, village by village. As N. Gunson writes:

“the impact of the Evangelical missionaries often provided the quickest way to self-assertion by the native peoples. In the world of culture conflict, which is in a sense the world of Evangelical religion, the Islander was given a plank to support himself in the tide of new concepts. Wherever that plank was grasped the Islander’s potential for self-assertion was increased.” (Gunson 1978:2).

‘Today village congregations are both conserving and renewing centres of church and community life. In most of the former LMS areas and the Methodist Churches in Tonga and Samoa a similar pattern is repeated with nearly every village or town congregation having an ordained pastor.’ (from Dr Deverell’s Doctoral thesis)

When the Deverells asked me if the Su’a family were still coming to Mt Albert, I said, ‘yes’ and got the reply, ‘Some Samoan (Congregational) churches expect the family to leave that church after the Minister’s death, some don’t’. So, thought I, there are different rules for living and expectations of church among Samoan Christians just as there are among European, Palagi, Presbyterians. Talosaga used to say about Mt Albert Cross-Cultural church, ‘We’ve got to find unity in our diversity.’

Bible translation:

A missionary with ability with languages would begin the translation. The village of Avao in Samoa has recorded that the missionary, the Rev. George Pratt, who came to the village in 1839, was an outstanding linguist who lived there for many years and had overall responsibility, with the help of his Samoan Colleagues, for the translation of the Bible into Samoan.

It becomes clear that different missionaries brought variations of what is outlined above, to different islands in Samoa and to different Island groups.

The Rev. Dr Fele Nokise is the son of a Minister of a Samoan Congregational Church, born in Samoa. Currently he is Principal, Pacific Theological College, Fiji.

His understanding of the message the LMS missionaries brought is somewhat different. Because the missionaries perceived their mission primarily in terms of saving souls, they tended to associate this with their understanding of Pacific

Islanders at the time as people whose souls were either lost or are on the way to be lost. In other words, Pacific Islanders were seen as pagans. And as such, they and their way of life (culture) all needed to be transformed. It ignited a process of cultural genocide. Any cultural trait that seemed to the missionaries to be of sensual nature were forbidden. Many dances, songs and art forms became victim of this stance.

The main theological emphasis was on the 'sinful' nature of Pacific Islanders. Sin therefore was the key theological premise. Conversion was simply understood as leaving one's old ways for the new. But the new ways were all Euro-centric. In other words, evidence that one had become a Christian was a display of certain behaviour and attitudes as well as cultivating values that were based on European understanding of what it meant to be 'civilised' European civilisation and European theology went hand in hand.

The Old Testament understanding of God as a patriarch, with sole authority and powerful etc was also emphasised. It was a deliberate ploy in the missionaries endeavours to convert the chiefs...and the theology of male dominance was accepted as suitable for Pacific Islanders. The latter group thrived on this as it affirmed their own cultural understanding of man.

The New Testament did not feature prominently in the theology of the missionaries. There was no emphasis on the Grace of God, Salvation was emphasised only as a kind of appendage to the whole issue of 'sin'

It would be fair to argue that the missionaries wanted Pacific Islanders to accept puritanical ideals. The emphasis on 'holiness' was the mission cry of the Methodists. The Anglican advocated the importance of the Eucharist and as such, stressed the importance of confirmation classes. This point was also cultivated by the LMS...who tended to divide the church into those who are communicant members and those who are not. For the LMS lot, the criteria in deciding who belongs where was repentance - meaning simply those who have given up old ways by adopting the new ways...so there are cases where those who have repented will wear dress and ties to distinguish them from the still heathen lot. Imitation by Pacific Islanders of European ways was very popular. This is understandable. Pacific Islanders, through the educational methods used by the missionaries, were essentially spoon fed. They were taught to memorise passages of the Bible. They were made to copy the sermons of the missionaries. In other words theological education

had no room for critical and analytical thinking. So Pacific Islanders were not taught to think - rather the missionaries did the theological thinking for them. Whatever the missionaries said therefore, was taken as the final word.

In time, this had a profound influence on the theological thinking of Pacific Islanders. Their theological understanding is basically a replica of what the missionaries taught. Even today, there is a real reluctance to part with the legacy of missionary teaching. There is a fear because there is a belief that what they have been given is the truth. For example the dress code for Sunday, the wearing of hats, ties, white clothes etc. Even the way Sunday is observed...in some churches, hardly any movement within the village is allowed until evening.

As Pacific Island scholars began to emerge from the 1970s, numerous theological questions have been raised as part of the process to re-assess the merits of many of the missionary beliefs. It has not been an easy task. Many Pacific churches are struggling with the challenging task of trying to formulate their own theology...in relation to their own context.....they have inherited many theological beliefs that have no relevance to their local context and the modern world they now live in. For example...amongst Samoans...men must wear tie and jacket to church on Sunday...but all of them in Samoa live in a country that is hot with temperatures hovering between 28-32 every day...women must a hat and long dress. Or take music which has been revolutionised by the missionaries...most of the tunes are from the west...Island traditional tunes are regarded as not suitable for hymns and praising God...so now parishes have to forge out enormous amount of money to purchase the latest keyboard and for some of the youths to go to music school to learn the basic of European music in order to play the hymns. What is sad is that when Pacific Islanders sing their own tunes they come alive in a way far more natural than singing a composition from somewhere in the West.

The Rev. Murray McMeikan grew up in Whangarei.

His Christian upbringing was in the Whangarei Congregational Church where the Minister was the Rev. Les Allen, an LMS missionary in Papua for 10 years before. His quiet influence and teaching led Murray into the Congregational Church Ministry and for many years he served in PIC churches where the congregations were made up of Pacific Island immigrants.

In responding to the Rev. Dr Fele Nokise's description of the strong but rather negative Christian message and theology LMS missionaries brought to the Pacific Islands in the 19th century, Murray McMeikan writes that different missionaries had their own slant, some liberal, some conservative. But they all came from the Reformed tradition, with a strong sense of the sovereignty of God and the reality of sin. People needed to repent and believe the good news of the Gospel that Christ came to save sinners and lead us to a new life.

'Under the Congregational tradition there is a strong sense of covenant, where church members promise they will accept the Lordship of Christ and take their part in the local Ekalesia (Church). To move from one church to another requires a certificate of transfer.

'Basically this is what people hold to when they come to New Zealand. As to what extent this has been modified over the years is hard to say and it's simplistic to expect an answer.

'I found on coming to the P.I.C. in 1969 that theologically I had no difficulty in fitting in with the people, from Samoa. They are not fundamentalists in the narrow sense. They have a strong sense of churchmanship and like to run things in an orderly fashion. The position of eldership is honoured and respected.

'It's interesting to note that graduates of the Congregational College here in Auckland under the Principal, the Rev. Howell Nicholas, went back to teach in Malua Theological College of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, over the last 40 years or so, as well as other areas of the Pacific, people like Kenape Falatoese and Oka Faolo who was Principal of Malua for some years, and secretary of the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa. So the theology at Malua has had input from recent graduates over the years. As far as clothing worn and hymns etc this reflects the conservative nature of Pacific Islanders generally, blame it on the missionaries if you like.

'Having taught lay preachers in the P.I.C. for many years I find that there is a common culture throughout the PIC and that their preaching is what I would call middle of the road, simple, Biblical and to the point. Also if you travel through N.Z. you will find a common order of service which hardly varies from one PIC to another. I find that talking with Malua graduates, some who have not been ordained, that theologically we have much in common. In other words, I have always felt at home in the PIC.

Another experience:

As LMS missionaries preached and taught the Christian message in Samoa those who responded positively often felt called by God to be missionaries to other Pacific Islands. This was how Samoan missionaries came to the Tokelau Islands. They worshipped, preached and taught in Samoan, not the language spoken there. Unlike the LMS missionaries these Samoan missionaries did not sit down and learn the Tokelauan language first to communicate, but the people became more proficient in Samoan hearing the teaching and the Bible read in Samoan.

This was the experience of his Christian upbringing of the **Rev. Fakaofu Kaio** in the Tokelaus. He is now Presbyterian minister at Onehunga Cooperating Parish with a congregation of Samoans, Cook Islanders, Nuieans, Europeans – Presbyterians, Methodists and Churches of Christ members – a demanding Cross Cultural Church.

SOME OF THE BELIEF SYSTEMS THAT MISSIONARIES BROUGHT TO SAMOA AND EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR

- observation as a church member (a boy) growing up in Samoa

The Rev. Ma'afala Koko current Minister at Edinburgh Street, Newton P.I.C.

1. No swimming in the sea or playing on Sundays.
2. No smokes on Sundays (cooking must be done early in the morning).
3. Everyone must go to Church on Sunday (or else will be fined by the village chief's meeting).
4. All the women must wear a hat to church on Sunday.
5. Everyone must wear white to church
6. Boys must sit together with the other boys; same with the girls, men and women. (There is a designated place for each group to sit in church).

And usually an elder sits by where the girls and boys are sitting with a stick, to keep them quiet when they make noises during the service.

The same arrangement happens when we went to the pastor's school (a'oga a le faifeau). All the girls sit in the front part of the house while the boys usually sit at the back of the house while the ministers sit at side of the house or the tala.

Every gathering of the Pastor's school starts with a song, then followed by a reading from the Bible, a reflection, a prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer together.

Everyone must fold arms and close eyes when the prayer is said. If anyone makes a noise or does any unnecessary movements during prayer time, he or she will be called by the minister to come and sit in front of him, where he will be told off and reminded about the importance of keeping quiet during the devotion. After that such person will get the stick from the minister. Also all boys must all wear shirts and properly clothed every time they come to the pastor's school. The same rule applies to the girls.

7. In our families, each evening the pastor or minister will ring the bell. That is a signal to every family in the village that it is time for the (lotu) time to worship God.

Usually each family are gathered together in their own house. If a chief has more than three houses where all his children and extended family live, during lotu time, most families all gather together at the chief's house for a lotu.

The lotu always starts with a hymn, then by a responsive reading or a reciting of a Psalm then reflection and prayer.

After that, the chief or father of the family will give out instructions and advice for the duties for the next day.

8. Every morning, before daylight, this is the time for morning devotion or lotu, quite often you will hear the singing from the old men and women and as a boy I was encouraged to wake up from my sleep and joined in. We were told always to say a prayer before meals. Even when I was in the boarding school, the bell will ring at 6am in the morning, and I will sit up on my bed and join with the singing.

While it was still dark, if the others and I didn't sing, the older boys knew that we were not awake, and they will come around with the stick to make sure that everyone was awake. In every meal and before we went to sleep there is always prayer.

‘ When I came to New Zealand in 1971, as a young man, I am thankful to God that I lived and experienced that kind of upbringing. I haven't touched anything about the importance of the Samoan culture yet; but I feel sharing just some of the belief systems I grew up from is important.

‘Because when I got here as a young man in the early 70's, life here was very different, and some of the belief systems I learned helped me in my journey. Examples: I learned the importance of faith in God and going to church. I learn about the bad effects of alcohol and smoking. I had four close friends at the time and they were all single and one of them liked alcohol, and smoked and the three of us never liked any of those. We would go to dances and socials but we never got into trouble.’

One of the questions Talosaga was asked was the story of a church early immigrants from Samoa had chosen to attend. One such in Auckland was a Congregational Church in Edinburgh Street, Newton. It turned out the history of the first 50 years of that church had been written by Dr Melanie Anae.

NEWTON PIC ‘The First Fifty Years’ – a brief history by Dr Melanie Anae

This brief history of Newton Church (Edinburgh Street) was compiled by Dr Melanie Anae – one of the many ‘children’ of Newton Church – based on her Doctoral thesis – on the identity journeys of NZ-born Samoans.

The Preface to this account begins with an acknowledgement that this former Congregational Church became the first, the oldest, largest and only Pacific Island Church which caters to four ethnic groups: Samoan, Cook Island, Niuean and its young people through the English Speaking Fellowship. Its founders were the Rev. Bob Challis and the long-serving Rev. Leuatea Sio.

In 1943 the Rev. Bob Challis, a missionary in the Cook Islands, considered retiring from his work in the Cook Islands to minister among Cook Islanders and Niueans in New Zealand. This came about in 1947 with the acceptance of a Call by the Rev Challis to work with the three Island groups meeting at Beresford Street Congregational Church, Niueans and Cook Islanders who hold services in the hall next to the Church and the few Samoans who meet in the basement of the hall.

The NZ Congregational Union understood then that there were about 700 Islanders in Auckland and about 500 in Wellington.

There was another Congregational Church of long standing not far from Beresford Street, in Edinburgh Street, Newton. (Perhaps it had been begun by a different group of Congregationalists from England.) Their European congregation in 1948 had only one service on a Sunday and decided to offer their premises every Sunday evening at 6pm for Nuieans to hold a service, followed at 7pm for the Cook Islanders. The next year a separate service for Samoans began at the Newton church.

Also in 1948 regular services for Pacific Islanders were begun in Wellington.

In 1950 the first Sunday School began at Newton, by the next year there were 19 children enrolled.

By 1951 requests to Samoa for a Samoan Minister were turned down so the Rev. Challis began negotiations to start a New Zealand Theological College to train Pacific Island students for the Ministry. Before this Pacific Island ministers had trained in their own Islands. This College was set up in 1951 in Mt Eden under the leadership of the Rev. Howell Nicholas. His wife, Edna, became Housekeeper/Matron for the boarding students. Kenape Falatoese was one of the first students, Leuatea Sio and Pepe Nokise (longtime PI Minister in Wellington) not long after.

During this period of the early 1950s Pacific Island house groups (before churches) began in Hastings, Porongahau, Tokoroa, Mangakino, Rotorua, Masterton, and Christchurch. These would be some of the places where Pacific Island immigrants found work. Within a few years churches had been recognised in Tokoroa and Hastings and a small church was built in Helensville on top of a double garage!

In November, 1956, Leuatea Sio, was Ordained and Inducted as a full-time Minister at Newton, and Pepe Nokise was ordained and inducted to the PI Congregational Church in Wellington. Each gave long and deeply appreciated service in those churches. Kenape Falatoese gave similar service in Christchurch and in 1987 served as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

“For the first decade of its history Newton Pacific Island Church was the only home for us in our adopted country” – the Rev. Sio, from the Foreword to the history.

“Newton Church’s ‘children’ remain consciously or not, forever bound to Newton Church.....Newton Church is a second home , an extended family, a moral community, and the venue of sociality or face-to-face relations, where day-to-day spiritual, cultural and physical needs of Newton’s children can be accommodated. It too contains within it the tensions and conflicts of families and communities, at the same time that it gives refuge, strength and identity.” - Melanie Anae, from the Preface to the history.

In 1958 the Tokoroa Church was opened.

The Rev. Challis in 1954 established the Boys’ Brigade in Newton and several of the boys later became Ministers. In 1958 Newton Church added Life Boys for boys too young for Boys Brigade, and Girls’ Life Brigade.

By 1961 the work of all Lay Preachers (40 of them) was acknowledged and celebrated. Plans got under way to build a new church at Newton and this was opened in 1962 by Stuart Ennor, Chairman of the Congregational Union and with a long association with Newton as a Deacon and Lay Minister until 1979. The new church

seats 700. The PICC in New Zealand becomes the largest Church in the Congregational Union.

1964 was a full year: house groups and churches services were established at East Tamaki, Otara, Papatoetoe, Otahuhu, Manurewa, Mangere, Te Atatu, Blockhouse Bay, Helensville, New Lynn. The need for a church in Mangere is seen as urgent. The Rev. Ta Upu Pere came to Newton from the Cook Islands, making 7 Pacific Island Ministers in the PICC. The next year the Rev. Elisi Sionetali was ordained and inducted to work in the Auckland area serving Nuieans – the first Nuiean Minister to serve in New Zealand. He died in 1977. The Rev. Lucky Mave joined the team at Newton.

By this time many people with welfare, legal and financial problems were coming to Newton for help from the Ministry team and others, like Stuart Ennor, a lawyer.

Discussions began in 1967 about the merger of the PICC into the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. The Rev. Challis said, *“As the Senior Minister I support this because I feel the need of our people to be in a larger family.....to have the opportunity to witness in a larger denomination than our own.”*

New offices and Sunday School rooms – called Challis House – were built at Newton PIC.

In 1968 the Rev. Challis spoke further about the merger with the Presbyterians: *“To put it quite bluntly the Congregational Church of NZ is too small to be able to provide the help and advice that we in the PICC need.....And I pray that we will go forward with an overwhelming majority in favour of joining the Presbyterian Church so that at the annual assembly of the Congregational Union of NZ we may be able to influence the other brethren of the church.”*

The opening and dedication of the Otara PICC took place. It was recognised that that fellowship was facing a big challenge for the population of Pacific Islanders in that district had in a short space of time increased from 500 to about 3,000 and growing!

At the Congregational Assembly in October, 1969 it was decided that all PIC churches must merge with the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. This merger took place in November, 1969 at the Presbyterian General Assembly. A small number of Congregational churches chose not to join and continued a separate life, though most are prospering as multi-cultural churches.

The Ministry team at Newton decided after the Rev. Challis’ retirement that the Ministers needed to meet and plan together on a weekly basis – the Ministers Fraternal began meeting weekly. This development was very necessary as there were several different cultures worshipping at Edinburgh Street, sharing buildings and some programmes together, but also needing to respect each of these culture’s uniqueness and perception of the needs to be addressed.

The Rev. Challis’ retirement was marked in 1973, remembering 40 years of service both in the Cook Islands and with Pacific Islanders at Edinburgh Street. It was also a year that recognised that some of the PI Ministers were now ministering in Palagi parishes.

The ‘Outlook’, the Presbyterian journal, in 1975 had an article about Pacific Islanders’ churches: *“Two PIC’s with very different histories recently celebrated anniversaries.....Newton has grown from a handful of Cook Islanders and Nuieans in 1943 to the largest church in NZ....Mangere Central which celebrates its 3rd*

anniversary grew from two groups of Cooks and Samoans and is a truly uniting church, now embracing a group of Niueans....”

Back in 1971 a Samoan worship group began in Avondale and in 1976 were able to call the Rev. Le’ao Si’itia to be their Minister. This work among Samoans began in the Avondale Presbyterian Church but not long afterwards the Presbyterian Church building was abandoned as they united with Avondale Methodists and a new building was erected on Methodist land.

In 1977 it was decided the annual PIC Fellowship conferences were to reconvene. This extract from the ‘Evening Post’ in Wellington on February 22nd, 1977:

“Leaders of the Pacific Island section of the Presbyterian Church met in Wellington at the weekend for the first time in five years. It was a significant occasion. It brought together about 150 people from 28 Pacific Island churches who are caught in a peculiar situation. On the one hand they are Islanders with a strong cultural heritage they wish to retain. But they also want to identify with the predominantly European Presbyterian denomination, In 1969 these islanders left the ailing Congregational Union and became Presbyterian. They want to be active members of that church. But the people they represent are a small part of the denomination....And they have all the usual adjustment strains of people living in an alien culture. The solution has been to meet for the weekend and share ideas and encourage each other. This used to be done annually during the days of the Congregational Union.”

In February, 1978, the second PIC Fellowship Conference was held in Christchurch.

At Newton Church by this time there were 211 elders: 12 in the English Speaking group, 19 Tuvalu and Tokelauan, 28 Cook Islanders, 52 Niueans, 118 Samoans. Church members totalled 7,171.

There were Branches (still under the umbrella of Newton): Helensville – Cook Islanders 35; Glen Innes – Cook Islanders 55; Mt Eden – Cook Islanders 166; Otahuhu – Cook Islanders 260; Avondale – Samoans 305.

That year 1978 the Rev. Sio was Auckland Presbytery Moderator. Further church building was going on at Newton – the Newton Hall Complex necessitating the demolition of the original Newton Church building.

By 1979 there were 8,000 under pastoral care and 800 communicant members. The Rev. Sio raised the matter at the Presbyterian General Assembly that the merger (10 years earlier) had slowed down the progress of the PIC in NZ. The rigidity of the Book of Order and building policies impeded the growth of the PIC, he maintained. (Presbyterian Church government is very different from Congregational)

The Grey Lynn Presbyterian Church was restructured so that it catered for Palagi, Tokelauans and Tuvaluan, and Samoan ekelesia under the leadership of the Rev. Liu Tepou.

In 1980 the Rev. Bob Challis died. To the Newton PIC he was ‘Papa Challis’. He had been ordained in 1933 for Missionary service in the Cook Islands under the London Missionary Society. He had come to Auckland in 1943 to minister to Pacific Islanders then worshipping at Beresford Street Congregational Church, which was the logical place of worship for those who had come from the Pacific Islands where the Christian message had been brought by LMS missionaries when that Missionary Society was under the authority of the Congregational Union in England. It was in 1943 that the Edinburgh Street Congregational Church had the space to let the Pacific Island groups worship in their own languages and ‘Papa Challis’ was a good person to

become the Senior Minister. He could preach in 4 languages. He was the founder of the Boys' Brigade in New Zealand and had already set BB up in Rarotonga in the 1933's. When he retired he had given 40 years' ministry in the Cook Islands and in Auckland. Later 1,500 were at his funeral.

Another new development took place in 1980. The Rev. Ned Ripley, who had been Minister at Otara PIC since 1966, was appointed Dean of Maori and Pacific Studies at the Presbyterian Theological College in Dunedin.

In 1986 the Rev. Tu'i Fatialofa was ordained and inducted as an Assistant Minister at Newton. She was the first Pacific Island woman to minister in New Zealand. She did not have an easy time in her Theological training in Dunedin. She put this down to two factors: her age and her culture. She said she didn't take too much notice but got on with her studies. She also became the first Pacific Island woman to be a hospital chaplain. Her outstanding work at National Women's Hospital earned her the title 'A caring pioneer'. A serious stroke terminated her ministry too soon.

Newton PIC purchased a camp site for youth at Huia.

The English Speaking Group set up the Tagata Pacific Resources Development Trust (TOPS) offering a wide variety of training courses to counter Pacific Island unemployment in Auckland. It continues to operate but now in K.Road. In 1988 it was the only TOPS training agency to be controlled, administered and serviced by NZ-born Pacific Islands people.

A Samoan preschool centre was established at Newton.

In 1993 Te Atau PIC was opened with a generous donation from Newton. Another English-Speaking Group initiative was beginning: TROPICS Discipleship Training Programme was launched.

In October the Presbyterian General Assembly considered the proposal that a Pacific Island Synod was necessary to give more consideration to Pacific Island concerns that was happening through the existing Presbyterian structures.

A conference was held at Manukau PIC : "Unity and shared Ministry" to share youth issues between PI Ministers and regional youth leaders.

A Thanksgiving service was held at Newton to mark the retirement of the Rev. Leuatea Sio QSO, JP, and his loving wife.

During the Samoa Independence Day celebrations in 1994 the Rev. Sio was honoured and awarded with the Order of Tiafau. Only three people outside of Samoa have been awarded this title.

The Rev. Sio was born in Western Samoa in 1925. In 1950 he migrated to New Zealand to get a better education. He was ambitious to be a teacher but felt called to become a Minister, went to University and Theological College and was ordained as Minister at Newton PIC in 1957, became Senior Minister in 1973 and retired in 1993, after 36 years in ministry. Young people called him, 'Uncle Bob'.

This retirement meant a new minister was required and the Rev. Dr Tafatolu Filemoni, who was a former member of Newton, came with his wife in 1995 after serving in Western Samoa and San Diego. Before he went overseas he had served for a time as the first Pacific Island consultant in the Presbyterian Parish Development and Mission Department, amongst other things training children's teachers and youth leaders.

Papakura PIC was opened. In November the same year the Newton English-Speaking Group was recognised as another ethnic group and included in the proposed structure of the developing PIC Synod. This ethnic group was now covering all the English-speaking activities of the Church. They had elders in the combined Session, had regular church services and participated in all the decision-making committees including the initiation of community projects. From the eldership in this group have come a number of Ministers operating in the shared ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

In 1996 Anae Arthur Anae was nominated to the National Government as a List MP to become a member of a NZ Government in power. Arthur had been a member of Newton Church since his family arrived in NZ in 1951.

In 1998 the office of Senior Minister was abolished and replaced by the three current Ministers working as a Team. That year marked 50 years since Newton Church was established so the Jubilee was celebrated. It was also when the PIC Synod of the PCANZ was put into its official place.

Dr Fele Nokise's MTh Thesis on the history of Pacific Islanders Congregational Church up to 1969 is available in the Hewitson Library Archives. It offers some useful accounts on issues Talosaga discovered.

Samoans may now attend a variety of churches, not all are solely Pacific Island Presbyterian (formerly Samoan Congregational) Churches.

Research undertaken in the 1990s by Jemaima Tiatia, a Samoan young person working towards her MA thesis, showed that young Samoans (Generation 2) were tending to leave the Congregational (by then Presbyterian) Pacific Island churches and to join more charismatic churches – Pentecost-type. Talosaga was finding the next Generation were different (Generation 3). Following up his findings on what these young people were wanting to know, a number of things have come to light but the question **'where are these young people going to church?'** has not found any one answer.

Many Presbyterian Generation 1 Samoans now attend churches where they are part of **Cross-Cultural congregations** with Europeans, other Pacific Islanders, Asians, Africans.

Some of these churches have established strong Youth groups. So what are young Samoans learning from their studies? The strong point of preaching and teaching in the Islands from the message brought there by London Missionary Society missionaries concentrated on the Old Testament but also on Jesus' death on the Cross for forgiveness of sins.

Many Cross-Cultural churches will be using the three-year Common Lectionary, used by many denominations, Roman Catholic and Protestant. In that - the emphasis is on one of the Gospels each successive year: Matthew, Mark, Luke - with readings as well from John's Gospel from Lent to Pentecost. Each week there are, too, readings from the Old Testament, Psalms and the Epistles. While the first three Gospels deal with the Crucifixion and Resurrection as central to the Christian message they also give a great deal of attention to Jesus' life, his teachings and his example of how to live life in all its fullness, here and now, not just after death. The motivation of the

Christian message giving sole emphasis to the Crucifixion could be described as Fear – of sins leading to Hell. Rather the emphasis of Jesus' total life and death is on Love.

In Mt Albert church where Talosaga was Minister for eight years the Youth group, majority Samoan, show fine talents in singing and in drama, and willingly share these talents in church services on occasion. The Youth Group's studies are based on the Three-year Lectionary.

It has become clear that there are more concerns about Pacific Island young people today than has been realised. One preacher recently stressed this.

There are Samoan Ministers and Leaders involved with Pacific Island Youth in a variety of settings. Their experiences and learnings need to be known more widely. This is an area that needs more research.

The Rev. Mua Strickspon-Pua is a Samoa Presbyterian Minister, not in a parish church, but as he says involved in many ways. His involvement with Pacific Island young people in the community has expanded his understanding of how Jesus lived and what he taught from what he learnt in church, he now thinks.

'When I stand in Youth Court, Mangere Hawks games, our Pasifika Arts Exhibition, picket lines with Unions, guest speaker to Counties Manukau Rugby League under 15 & 17, doing the wedding & funerals, working with our Gay, Lesbian & Fa'afafine communities, our at-risk students & families, I am confronted by the reality that our Church is not out there but I concede there are individuals of the NZ Presbyterian Church-doing-the-hard-yards.

'I think it's important to DO the theological study but 90% of the theology does not actually represent me, or the young people, their families, our communities - it appears safe and distant. No risk taking, no pain and that's not how I understand Easter and Christmas. I admire the Ministry of the Church internally within the Church but it's outside - out and amongst Creation, Tangata whenua, that challenges me about my faith, my cultural practices and faith deeds.

'When street people abuse me about the Church I think why aren't some of those do-gooders out here on the streets because I believe Jesus would be here. When street people lose it and go wild with emotional anger where are you Church? and please do not patronise me that I am there. Drunk, drugged, abused, these are the people who need the Creation theology, the Redemption story, to experience the Alofa, Aroha, Agape (Love).

'Pakeha (Palagi) side I believe you have a role to play in the changes, Maori whanau major leadership role and Pasifika being servants of Atua. We are of that generation who my mokopunas ask me the hard questions that come from Atua. . My Hope is in Atua, (God), the people and creation.'

It has become clear that questions about Pacific Island young people today is a concern to more people than might have been realised. That may be about their involvement or not in the churches or the problems they have been experiencing in the community.

At a recent Church service the Preacher chose to speak about Psalm 137 verse 4 from the First Testament in the Christian Bible, 'How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' He said that psalm came from a period in Jewish history when the Jewish leading citizens had been taken from their beloved and very important city of Jerusalem to a very strange city in Babylon. They were captives and their captors said, 'You're noted for your singing, sing to us.' And the reply was, 'How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?'

The preacher then said it must have been like that for the Samoan immigrants coming from Samoa to a very strange city like Auckland. But the big difference was they were not captives like the Jews in Babylon. They had chosen to come to New Zealand for more money, more opportunities - like more educational opportunities for their children - but still, 'How can we sing a new song in a strange land?'

He went on to talk about present day Samoan young people. They are used to living in New Zealand but society has changed and is changing so much they're asking questions - like the ones Talosaga was finding. He went on to say 'What churches are our Samoan young people joining these days?'

Generation 2 young people were leaving the churches their parents belonged to and going to, say, more charismatic churches. What about their children - Generation 3? He said, 'We don't know? It is a concern, they may not be joining up anywhere or not going anywhere.'

This also the case of many Palagi young people. Most of the Christian denominations are facing this in many of their churches throughout New Zealand and don't know how to address it. This was not a question Talosaga raised but it follows on from the questions he framed and the findings. One comment I have heard is 'Talosaga has opened a can of worms - but good ones'!

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

So what has been done in 2012 with Talosaga Su'a's initial Findings about Pacific Island Young People Today?

What we didn't know, and can't know, is important:

- *Who were the young people Talosaga interviewed?*
- *How were they found?*
- *In what setting? Or settings?*
- *How many?*

I made the assumption that they would have been Samoan but this may be quite wrong. I have restricted my explorations to Samoan Presbyterians - formerly Samoan Congregational. The field otherwise was too wide with different denominations and Island groups.

In consultation with the Rev. Dr Allan Davidson (very experienced in research), most of the information has been sought from Presbyterian Samoan ministers and from two Palagi ministers with experience, either in Samoa, or in a newly established Presbyterian Church congregation for new immigrants.

Attempts to find any other relevant current research being carried out was not easy to access but some contacts have been made with a few in touch with Pacific Island research.

My role has been to gather information, not to write material myself since I too am Palagi.

More work needs to be undertaken if the churches are going to take the issues affecting Pacific Island Young People today seriously.

Talosaga's aim had been to find some answers and then to have a small publication prepared for young people themselves. This I can't undertake to do.

The findings, even just so far, need to be made known - perhaps through small publications:

- * to parents whose young people may be asking questions;
- * perhaps in some form available to young people themselves;
- * and to Ministers to help them understand possible changes in the needs of their congregations now.

Contact needs to be made to those who could pass on information gained
e.g. Presbyterian Assembly Executive Officer, (the Rev. Martin Baker), Presbyterian Archives, the Rev. Don Ikitoelagi, and others.
The Pacific Island Synod

Further action is needed.

For any who wish to do more research the Contact for advice is

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