

***FETAUSIA'I* – A SERVANT LEADERSHIP PARADIGM FOR THE
MISSION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN SAMOA**

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ABSTRACT

Christian churches in Samoa today face public criticism regarding the autocratic style of leadership they have embraced and encouraged, which goes hand in hand with their lack of attention for people below the poverty line. This research addresses the problem entrenched in the theology and ecclesiology of the Methodist Church in Samoa (MCS) today, which is captured in the Samoan expression *E lē fa'a'ele'elea se faife'au* – literally translated, “pastors are not supposed to do dirty work.” The focus of the research is an analysis of the problem imbedded in this belief, particularly its failure to embody the Christ-like qualities of shepherding, stewardship, serving and caring. From a sociological point of view, the cultural values of *tautua* (service) and *fa'aaloalo* (respect) have been applied to the clergy through this expression in an exclusive and elitist way that promotes the status and wealth of church leaders or ministers, at the expense of the quality of life of their followers. The MCS' style of leadership is hierarchical, and is manifested in the cultural system of *va-fealoa'i* or respect for those in authority, a system that privileges seniority and depends on the flow of material wealth from church members to clergy. This leadership model is viewed as absolute by many MCS ministers, but it also contributes to the contemporary economic and mission crises the Church now faces. It negates mutual service and embraces a notion of leadership centred in ‘being served.’ The Christological view of Jesus in the Gospels and the Pauline theology of servant leadership offers a different perspective, grounded in Jesus as ‘Servant-Lord.’ A new model of church leadership is proposed for the MCS, based on this Christocentric vision of servant leadership and the relational, inclusive and reciprocal understanding of service rooted in the Samoan cultural practice of *fetausia'i* (reciprocal caring).

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my dearest parents, Kioa Faimanifo Latu Tusa and Sesa Lemana-Kioa; and my late father-in-law, To'oala Vaisauali'i Keresoma. You have always been my inspirational servant leaders, who taught me to be a servant of all.

And to

My wife and children:

Lynette Ruta, Blessing, Honour, Glory and Mathew.