By Rev. Jolame Lasawa

1964 - 1966

The inauguration of the Independent Conference was on Saturday, 11th of July 1964. Rev Setareki Akeai Tuilovoni (LTh, B.D., MST) was inducted first President. Tuilovoni, a son of Natokalau, Matuku, Lau was envisaged by many, missionaries, academics and institutions be the first president of the Methodist Church in Fiji (MCF) after independent from the Methodist Church Conference of Australasia. He was first i taukei to be Chairman of the United Synod – inducted (Wednesday 7 November 1962) at the eve of church independence (11th July 1964). Some said that he was born to lead. “Setareki is a born leader and a fine Christian. He is a man of rare ability, a man capable of leadership and of assuming big responsibility.” Some of his words during his induction are:

- “Methodists in Fiji must move with the times and not cling to tradition if it does not help the members in their religious growth” — [Sermon at the Centenary Church, Suva on Wednesday November 7, 1962 when he was inducted Chairman of the United Synod of Fiji.]

His objectives/Aims of Leadership: The renewal of the church life and stressed the need for more religious instruction, co-operation with other bodies, focus in youth work as they are the church of today and church unity.

His legacies [advocacy for church renewal and spirituality, Church unity and financial competent.]


Married to Sera and had 6 children.

There were Seven (7) Methodist Divisions in the Church: Bau-Ra, BANadroga, Indian, Lau, Lomaiviti, Rewa, Vanualevu-Rotuma.

The social issues of the time: Punishment by hanging, women police, low cost housing for church members, work on Sunday.

Emphasis: enhancing of the work of God, stewardship, translation of books to suit Sunday School and church members and leadership training.

Conference Secretary – Rev Peter Keith Davies, Connexional Secretary – Rev John Bamford Hudson Robson.

1967 – 30th June 1968

George Nakaora was the President. Born in Harea, Motusa, Rotuma on the 30th January 1910 became a lay preacher in 1930. A confirmed catechist in 1932 and candidate to the ministry in 1937. Ordained in 1943 married to Feaserua Tirotuma and they had 13 children.

Appointments in Kadavu, Rotuma, Suva, Levuka, Study/Deputation in Australia, Davuilevu, Levuka, Oinafa, Nabua in 1967 while President.

Died on the 30th June 1968 [on his 2nd
from July to December 1968 after Nakaora’s death. From Preston, Victoria, Australia was born on the 9th October 1917. Married to Winifred Joyce and had 4 children.

His appointments in Fiji: Bible School, Ba – Nadroga Divisional Superintendent, Rewa, Chairman Fiji District, Wesley, Connexional Secretary, President of the Conference in 1968.

Social issues of the time: Taralala (danisi se tuwisi), Gambling.

Conference Secretary: Rev Peter Keith Davies.

1969 – 1971
Rev Peter Keith Davies (LTh) President of the Church in 1969 – 1970. From Sydney, Australia was born on the 14th March 1926. Married to Betty Isobel Davies and had 3 children. Ordained in 1954

Appointments in Fiji: Lakeba, Nasa- vasavu, Ba – Nadroga Divisional Superintendent, Secretary to Conference, Director of Christian Citizenship & Social Services, President of the Conference in 1969.

Moved to Australia on the 27th November 1971.

Stood as a Candidate into the Political General Election in 1966 fighting for the social ills and issues that was affecting the people.

Legacies [Church spirituality and unity – ecumenism. A disciple of Tuilovoni and Nakaora]

Social issues of the time: Fijian traditional medicine, clothing, home brew, hotel operation on Sunday, low cost housing, low wages, birth control to be stop by the government, alcohol, dance on Sunday, Yaqona excessive consumption, school dropouts.

Emphasis: To unite all Christian churches

Rabi became a Division ‘kali’ from Cakaudrove Division – will include the Circuits of Buakonikai, Tabieng, Tabwewa and Uma.

Numbers of Division increased from 21 to 22.

Conference Secretary: Rev Paula Niukula – Connexional Secretary: Rev Stanley G Andrews

10th October 1970 – Fiji Independence from Britain [Tuilovoni bless the day with an inspired message.]

The Methodist Church in Fiji’s contribution in Fiji Independence was important. Submission of the Church in the Constitution review Commission was done by some missionaries and former missionaries.

On Sunday’s Thanksgiving Service, Dr. George A.F. Knight, Principal of Pacific Theological College delivered the Sermon at Albert Park.

Conference Secretary: Rev Paula Niukula Connexional Secretary: Rev Stanley G Andrews

July – December 1968
Rev John Bamford Hudson Robson (B.A., B.D) became Acting President
**1972 – 1974**


He returned to New Zealand on the 3rd of January

Emphasis: Church unity as Tuilovoni, Nakaora and Davies had elevated. Being principal at Davuilevu Theological College (DTC), he initiated fresh ecumenical curriculum and courses. Substantial number of Indian candidates at DTC. Emphasise the evangelization of the Indians in Fiji, supported the views of Revs Dr. George Brown, Authur Small, Hannah Dudley and many others. He promoted ministerial training retreats around Church Divisions in Fiji. Training of laities was also important to him.

Andrews made an important call to the Vanua, Lotu and Matanitu to work together in building up the people of Fiji.

He asked the ministers and Catechists (religious workers) to be truthful to their work in a fragmented society in Fiji.

Social Issues of the time: Urban drift was growing rapidly, Tourism industry affected the lives of women as guest house were centre of prostitution,

Formation of Viti Concern by the Church to visit the women who resided in the guest houses.

Appointment of the First Vice-President of the MCF in 1973 [Uraia Katisawani Koroi]. The position was resolved and approved in 1972 Annual Conference.

**1974 – 1976**


1975 – 1976 Vice President: Autiko Daunakamakama

1974 Change of Name: From Gau to Lomaiviti – e – Cake Division.

1976 I New Division - Veivekeni ni Ce- va kei Vitilevu [separated from Suva/ Davuilevu Division – includes the Circuits of Serua, Vatukarasa, Deuba, Beqa, Burenilotu and Namosi.] Total Number of Divisions in 1976 = 23

**1977 – 1979**

Rev. Daniel Motilal Mastapha (LTh, B.D.) was the President. Born in Buiniika, Le- vuka, Ovalau on the 30th October 1930, married Bella Rammath and they had 4 children. Rev Doug Telfer envisage his future leadership sent him to Suva to attend Suva Boys School. A lay preacher in 1951 and a candidate to the Ministry in 1953. Appointments: Assistant Suva, Namosau Ba, Study at Leonard Theological College (India), Nadi and Sigatoka, Nausori, Suva, Assistant Connexional Secretary and Appointed President Elect in 1976 Annual Conference.

Opened and dedication of Epworth Ar- cade [August 24, 1979 – by Rev Setareki Akeai Tuilovoni]

Emphasis: Evangelism – due to the decreased of statistics, Unity as political life could not hold the centre of unity, valuing the Fijian institutions, re-defining the mission of the church. In 1979, he requested that ministers preach less but pray and study the bible more, live more of a Christian lives and the Methodist Church be a praying church.

Social issues: Sunday ban [a teaching need to be formulated in regard to Sunday and its purpose.]

1977 Navosa became a New Division – separated from Nadroga Division will includes these Circuits – Nasaukoko, Noikoro and Raiwaqa – Total Number of Division in 1977 = 24

1977 – 1978 Vice President: Ratu Livai Volavola

Conference Secretary: Rev Tomasi Kanailagi Connexional Secretary: Rev Josateki Koroi.

**1980 – 1983**

Rev Inoke V. Nabulivou became the 8th President of the Church. From Dravu- walu, Naceva in Kadavu, he was born on the 21st of November 1934. He became a lay preacher in 1953, Cate- chist in 1955 and Candidate in the min- istry in 1956. Ordained in 1963 after his overseas study. Married to Lilian May and they had 3 children.


His emphasis: Spirituality of the Church members, Evangelization of non- Christian people in Fiji, particularly the Indo-Fijians, enhancing theological edu- cation and ministers’ seminar,

Social issues: proposed introduction of
Concept, Foundation-laying and Development of Epworth Arcade
(MCIF Archives)
Television, long service work of the soldiers who are serving overseas (due to broken families), elopement, yaqona drinking, ‘kati’, nightclub callers, gambling and public bar loiterers.

Huge task of reviewing the Constitution

Merging of the two position into one in 1983 [The Conference Secretary and Connexional Secretary into ONE POSITION CALLED THE GENERAL SECRETARY] It was discussed in 1982 and Approved.

FIRST GENERAL SECRETARY IN 1983 – REV PAULA NIUKULA.

Conference venue in Lautoka (1982)

First – Women Representative in the Annual Conference 1982. It was resolved and approved in 1981 Annual Conference.

1982 – The Divisions were first arranged in their Alphabetical order – See Minutes 1982.


1984 – 1986


Studies: Leonard Theological College in India (BD), University of the South Pacific (MA), USA.

Appointments: Davuilevu, Bible Translation, Suva, Secretary of Conference, Bible Translation, first i taukei to be Principal Davuilevu Theological College, Pacific Conference of Churches, Connexional Secretary, first to be General Secretary in 1983 after the Conference and Connexional Secretary were merged to one position (General Secretary), President of the Conference (1984 – 1986), Divisional Superintendent Vuda (1987).


Social Issues of the Time – Sunday law, broken families, increasing number of de facto relationship, increasing illegitimacy.
1982 Standing Committee: Front row (left to right): Ratu Manasa Kubiabola, Rev. Rusiate Tuderavu, Ratu Emosi Vuakatagane, Rev. Daniel Mastapha (Immediate Past President), Rev. Inoke Nabulivou (President), Rev. Paula N Niukula (General Secretary), Ratu Josua Rabukawaqa (Vice President), Ratu Livai Volavola, Mr. Peter Sumaru, Ratu Sela Naivaluvou and Rev. Lopeti Volau. Middle row (left to right): Mrs. Vasiti Raiwalui, Mr. Malakai Labaibure, Rev. Paula Tekei, Rev. Maciu Rika, Rev. Dr. Christopher S Dass, Ratu Aseri Sewale, Rev. Sairusi Qaranivalu, Rev. Elaisa Taito, Master Aisake Wiliame and Mrs Tulia Koroi. Back row (left to right): Rev. Dr. Finau Tu’uholoaki, Rev. Paula Vadiga, Rev. Tevita Nawadra, Deaconess Leba Laveti, Rev. Tomasi Kanailagi, Mr. Mosese Vunivutu, Rev. Ragho Prasad and Mr. Livai D. Tuisaravere

Left: Launch of the Mission to the Eighties
Above and Right: Rev. Paula Niukula
(MCIF Archives)
He praised the contributions of the Australian and New Zealand Churches in the development of the Methodist Church in Fiji. He also invited the wives and children of the past presidents to be present and acknowledged their contributions as well.

Celebration of the 150 years of Methodism in Fiji in 1985 – “From Lakeba to all over Fiji, Methodism exists from a humble setting. Now being flourished, grow and baring fruits through the hard labour of the missionaries and i taukei ministers and laities, the power of Christ death and resurrection supersede all explanations but to Glorify God for his encouragement, call, sent and work.”

A Self Study Team was formed to review the weakness, mistake, priorities of the church since its 20th year of Independence.

A Task Force for Researching/Planning in the Church was recommended by the Conference.

1987 – 1989
Rev Josateki Fifi Koroi (LTh) became the President of the Church. Son of Mavana in Yanuabalavu, he was born in 1932 and married to Nola Lambert. They had 3 children. He became a lay preacher in 1949 and a candidature to the ministry in 1952.

Appointments: Assistant Director YPD, YPD Director, W.P.C., Assistant Connexional Secretary, Nabua, Connexional Secretary, Chaplain Lebanon, YPD Davuilevu, Secretary to Conference, Davuilevu, Chaplain Sinai, Wesley, President (1987 – 1989)

Military coup on the 14th May 1987 after the General election on April.

1987 Different Conference in its history: less number, shortest conference in time, no choir competition, no catering, no election of some office bearers. Because of the coup, these events were not eventuated.

Emphasis: Spirituality, Christian unity, evangelism,

1983 – 1984 Vice President: Sir Josua Rabukawaqa
1987 – 1988 Vice President: Epeli Tagi
1985 – 1986 Vice President: Viliame Gonelevu
1989 Church Conflict and Division
1987 – New Division – Natewa [separated from Cakaudrove Division – Numbers of Division in 1987 - 25
1987 - 1988 Vice President: Viliame Gonelevu
General Secretary: Rev Manasa Lasaro

1990 – 1992
Rev Isireli Mocelakolako Caucau (LTh, B.D) became President. From Mavalevu, Batiki in Lomaiviti, attended Davuilevu Theological College from 1959 to 1962. Married to Litia Caucau.

Appointments: Davuilevu Bible School, Nagelekula Mission School, Matuku, Principal Davuilevu Bible School, Claremont Theological Seminary, Raiwaqa, Talatala Qase Cakaudrove, Navosa, Bau before appointed President in 1989 Annual Conference, General Secretary, Talatala Qase Suvavou, Davuilevu.


Emphasis: Hard work of the ministers to serve the church congregation, Prayer meetings, renewal of worship, ecumenism.

1992 – Division of the Church in Rewa [Rev. Anare Maravu]

1990 – New Division: Nadi [Separated from Vuda Division and will includes these Circuits – Nadi, Nawaka, Sau-naka, Namaka, and Rukuruku] Total Number of Division = 26

1992 – New Divisions: Davuilevu, Koro and Wailevu. [Davuilevu was separated from Suva – Davuilevu Division, Koro separated from Lomaiviti Division and Wailevu being separated from Nasavusavu Division.] Total Number of Division = 29

1989 – 1990 Vice President: Ratu Aca Vunakece

1991 – 1992 Vice President: Pita Tu-kana

General Secretary: Rev Manasa Lasaro

1993 – 1995

Rev Manasa Lasaro (Cert. Mgt. Dip. Social Development Administration, M.A) became President. From Tavea, Lekutu, Bua, he was a candidate in the ministry in 1966 and attended DTC in 1967, ordained in 1972. Married to Nanise Bakaniceva and they had 4 children.

Appointments: Dept Christian Citizenship and Social Services, University of Wales (study), CC&SS Director, PTC, C.A.T.D, CC&SS, General Secretary, President 1993 – 1995, Principal Navuso, Makoi, Part time Sec for CC&SS, Sec for CC&SS.


Emphasis: Church as the prophetic voice in to the nation, Focus on Christ in its mission work, education,

Social issues of the time: Casino, Prostitution, Land and its protection under the landowners, Sunday ban, poor and poverty, youths and problems, urbanization, drugs, and land.

September 10th 1993 – Rev Anare Maravu was dismissed from the Ministry of the Methodist Church in Fiji.

1993 New Division – Suvavou Division [separated from Suva Division will includes these Circuits – Nakurukuru and Suvavou] Total Number of Divisions in 1993 = 30

1994 New Division – Verata Division [separated from Bau Division will include these Circuits – Qoma and Vera-
Social Issues of the time: playing sports on Sunday, casino and gambling, pornographic movies, tapes and magazines, racial discrimination, unemployment, abuse of juvenile being used for by employer, luring of children to urban centre and ultimately ending up in criminal activities, excessive drinking of yaqona on Sunday, Christian State.

1998 – New Division – Tavua Division [separated from Ba Division will include these Circuits – Nadrau, Savatu, Tavua and Vatukoula] Total Number of Divisions in 1998 = 33


General Secretary: Rev Tomasi Kanailagi – Assistant General Secretary: Rev Laisiasa Ratabacaca

1999 – 2001

Rev Tomasi Kanailagi (LTh, BD, MTh.) was the President. From Viwa, Bau, Tailevu, was a candidate to the ministry in 1962, attended Davuilevu Theological College in 1967, ordained in 1968. Married to Ema Adiserevaki and they had 2 children.

Appointments: Nawaka, Davuilevu, Bible Translation, Theological College, Secretary of Conference, Chaplaincy in Lebanon, Third Minister Suva, Nauluvatu, Principal Davuilevu Theological College, Sydney, WPC, DTC, Raiwaqa, Assistant General Secretary, General Secretary, President 1999 – 2001, Secretary for Lay Pastors

Conference venues 1999 – 2001: Suva

Emphasis: Church growth during trial (2000 coup), spirituality and competent material wealth of the church, refresher course, training of lay members.


2001 – 1 New Division – Kinoya [separated from Suva Division] Total Number of Divisions = 41

1999 – 2000 Vice President: Ratu Inoke Seniloli

2001 – 2002 Vice President: Ratu Peni Rokotubau

General Secretary: Rev Dr I S Tuwere (July 2000), DGS – Rev Laisiasa Ratabacaca

2002 – 2004

Rev Laisiasa Ratabacaca (LTh, BD, MRel.) was the President. From Tarukua, Cicia in Lau was a lay preacher in 1957, Catechist in 1958, candidate to the ministry in

Rev. Laisiasa Ratabacaca (MCIF Archives)
Saturday, July 4, 1964

The Methodist Conference

The emergence of the Methodist Church in Fiji into full independence is an occasion of great significance to the Colony as a whole as well as an occasion of unalloyed pride and delight to every member of the Church that was founded on the teachings of John Wesley.

People of all races and all religious beliefs can have nothing but goodwill for the new Methodist Conference of Fiji and Rotuma.

Since 1835, when representatives of the Wesleyan Church first came to Fiji, a long line of devoted missionaries, teachers and other workers have caused the Methodist Church to become an integral part of the life of these islands in general and of the lives of an overwhelming majority of the indigenous Fijian people in particular.

It is no belittling of the great contributions made by other Christian denominations to say that the historic role of the Methodist Church in Fiji in the last 129 years has been something unique in the record of Christian missionary endeavour in the South Pacific.

It need only be said that those Methodists who brought the Christian faith to the Fijian people were men of broad outlook and imagination — qualities which enabled them to discern and ultimately to bring into play the best characteristics of individuals and the inherent nobility of character that stamps the Fijian race in its finest aspects.

The Inauguration of the Methodist Conference has brought to Suva possibly the greatest gathering of the Fijian people since the first visit of the Queen in 1953.

It is a time to remember the work and the achievements of Methodism in Fiji, and a time to rejoice in the great visible demonstration of the vigour and vitality of the Lotu Wesele in the troubled world of today.

ELEVEN OF MR JOGIA’S BIRDS WERE RUN DOWN
Matuku Division [separated from Yasayasa Moala – new name of the division in 2004 was Moala kei Totoya Division.] Total Number of Divisions = 47

2003 – 2004 Vice President: Ratu Meli Saukuru
General Secretary: Rev Jione Lagi – DGS: Rev Ame Tugaue

2005

Rev Jione Langi became the President. Originally from Pephaua, Malhaha, Rotuma was born on the 16th of August 1941. A lay preacher in 1962 and a candidate to the ministry in 1963. He attended DTC in 1964 and was ordained in 1969. He was married in 1972 to Fanefau Rigamoto and they had 3 children.

Appointments: QVS and RKS, Delanikoro, Bau, PTC, Suva, Australia, Superintendent of Rotuma, Director Department of Evangelism, Wellington, New Zealand, Auckland Fijian Congregation, Rotuman Congregation in Auckland, Divisional Superintendent Rotuma, Divisional Superintendent Wesley, Assistant General Secretary, General Secretary, President 2005, Died on Monday the 21st July 2005 at Pender Street, Suva [Burial – Davuilevu]

Emphasis: City mission, renewal and unity, in-service training

Social issues of the time: Christian family life, HIV/AIDS, Gambling, Drugs.

2005 – 3 New Division – Magodro [separated from Ba Division], Moala and Totoya separated into 2 Divisions. Total Number of Divisions in 2005 = 49.

2005 – 2006 Vice President: Ratu Epeli Dranikamate
General Secretary: Rev Ame Tugaue – DGS: Rev Tuikilakila K Waqairatu

2006 – 2008

Rev Laisiasa Ratabacaca was the President. (See Particulars – 2002 – 2004)
Conference venue in 2006 - Bau

2007 – 1 New Division: Vunidakua Division [separated from Naitasiri Division – included these Circuits: Naveiwakau and Vunidakua] Total Number of Divisions in 2007 = 50

2008 – 1 New Division: Navosa i Cake Division [separated from Navosa Division – included these Circuits: Nasauco, Nasaunivalu, Nasikawa, Nausori, Noikoro and Vatumali] Total Number of Divisions in 2008 = 51

2007 – 2008 Vice President: Ratu Peni Volavola
General Secretary: Rev. Ame Tugaue – DGS: Rev Tuikilakila Waqairatu

2009 – 2012

Rev Ame Tuqisi Tugaue was the President. Born on the 2nd of June 1948 in Sogobiau, Nadogo, Macuata, he became a lay preacher in 1967. Catechist in 1968 and a candidate to the ministry in 1971. Ordained in 1978, he married Salote Takaituba and they had 5 children.

Appointments: Lelean Memorial School, WPC, Muanikau, Panama, Niusawa, PTC, Nauluvatu, Lecturer DTC, Assistant General Secretary, General Secretary, President 2009 – 2012, Divisional Superintendent Nadi.

No Conference from 2009 – 2011.
Conference venue 2012 – Suva
Emphasis: -

Social issues: restrictions was placed to the church to speak about the issues ...

Rev. Laisiasa Ratabacaca with the Late Archbishop Emeritus Mataca (Fiji Times)

Rev. Ame Tugaue (Fiji Times)
2010 1 New Division – Namosi Division [separated from Veiwekani ni Ceva kei Vitilevu] Total Number of Divisions in 2010 = 54

2011 1 New Division – Nausori Division [separated from Rewa Division] Total Number of Division = 55

Vice President 2009 – 2010: Ratu Wame Gavidi
Vice President 2011 – 2012: Ratu Wame Gavidi
General Secretary: Rev Tuikilakila K Waqairatu - DGS: Rev Tevita B Nawadra

2013 – 2014
Rev Dr. Tuikilakila Kolilevu Waqairatu was the President. Born in NaroI, Moala in Lau on the 20th August 1948, he became a lay preacher in 1967, candidate to the ministry in 1970, attended DTC in 1971 and was ordained in 1976. Married to Joana Cagilaba and they had 1 daughter (Ro Meri Salote Senirewa Vasukinasau Waqairatu).

Appointments: Suva, DTC, Chaplain USP, MCD, UCA Melbourne, DTC, Principal DTC, Deputy General Secretary, General Secretary, President 2013 – 11th February 2014. Died on the 11th February 2014 at CWM Hospital, Suva.

Emphasis: Spirituality, Church Renewal, Reformation, Green Church [Embodied in the Connexional Plan]

Social issues of the time: Christian Family Life, Healthy life style, violence against women and children, HIV/AIDS, excessive drinking of yaqona on Sunday and in church owned premises.

2014 1 New Division – Makoi Division [separated from Davuilevu Division] Total Number of Divisions = 56.

2014 - Vice President: Ratu Peni Volavola