

## STATISTICAL GROWTH OF THE LDS CHURCH IN SAMOA AND TONGA

by  
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It is an honor to report the progress of the LDS Church in Samoa and Tonga for the year 1983. The casual visitor may not notice growth, but it is nevertheless very evident from statistics.

### TEMPLES

The most significant and noticeable change in 1983 was the dedication of both the Samoa and Tonga Temples. President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the Samoa Temple on August 5, then the Tonga Temple on August 9. Much has been reported in church magazines and newspapers about the dedications. So I will merely summarize. Opening of each temple to the public was dignified by the top executive in both countries - the king of Tonga on July 9, and the Head of State in Samoa on July 18. Each temple was dedicated in 7 sessions, with 6,600 attending in Samoa and about the same in Tonga. Other General Authorities were Elders Howard W. Hunter, Marvin J. Ashton, and L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve, Elders William Bangertter and John Groberg of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and Bishop H. Burke Peterson of the Presiding Bishopric. Since opening, both long-awaited temples went into heavy patronage by local temple members. Over half of the Samoa temple sessions are reported full. While in Tonga, the saints are performing about 5,000 endowments per month. This amazing record almost matches production of the long-established Hawaii Temple which is triple in size and enjoys very heavy tourist patronage. One interesting sidelight is that temple garment sales in these countries increased by about 400% in 1983.

### MEMBERSHIP

In 1983, each country grew in membership by about 2,400. Samoa ended the year with 40,705 and Tonga had 31,723. However, there were three new stakes created in Tonga, one of them encompassing the Ha'apai Island group. With the addition of the Ha'apai Stake, all of Samoa and Tonga are now served by stakes. There are eleven (11) stakes in Samoa, and ten (10) in Tonga. This compares favorably with Hawaii's 13 stakes of which two are BYU student stakes. One disconcerting problem with membership in these two countries is the heavy immigration movements of its members without proper transfer of membership records. This has resulted over the years in an alarming accumulation of almost 14,000 records of members whos addresses are unknown.

### MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

Strong member involvement, boosted by interest in the two new temples, resulted in another successful year of missionary activity in both countries. President Carl Harris led 214 full

time missionaries in baptizing 2,344 converts in Somoa. President Melvin Butler of Tonga, with his 210 missionaries, gleaned 2,261 convert baptisms. Almost all of the missionaries are local saints. Missionary interest in Tonga resulted in an historic achievement at the church-owned Liahona High School in Tonga. I understand that for the first time in school history, 100% of the approximate 120 graduating seniors either have been called as full time missionaries or are in the process of a call. I am told that the Church College of Western Samoa in Pesega enjoys a similar success in missionary preparation.

### MEETINGHOUSES

Althought many roads in Tonga have now been paved and automobiles are a common sight in both countries, the principle mode of transportation in Samoa and Tonga continues to be walking. In most cases, therefore, it is not practical to have two or more wards share a chapel. This is reflected in the number of meetinghouses provided for the members. The end of 1983 saw 71 meetinghouses in Samoa for their 103 wards and branches. This is almost twice the number of meetinghouses in Hawaii where the church is much more established. All ten of the Tonga stakes qualified themselves in 1983 to have meetinghouse construction under the new tithing faithfulness program of the church. Mainly due to reporting deficiencies, only four of Samoa's stakes qualified. This resulted in three new chapels either completed or construcion started in Samoa for the year, with Tonga doing eleven new chapels. Also there were eleven major additions or remodellings to existing chapels in Samoa and twelve in Tonga. That represented an outlay of over \$3 million in Samoa and over \$4 million in Tonga.

### SUMMARY

Samoa and Tonga both struggle with cultural differences as they cope with practices of a western civilization. Although continually improving, skill levels of leadership and technical functions are badly lacking. Nothing, however, daunts either the pursuit of righteousness by these Saints or their intrinsic ability to feel the spirit of God. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God". To me, that is the destiny of these choice children of the Prophet Lehi.