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Sunday Service at Kanana Fou Congregational Christian Church - Hawaii



On Sunday, June 16, 2024, the Samoan Heritage Week event moved to a religious setting following its official opening on Saturday. The Honorable Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga and Honorable Prime Minister Fiaame Naomi Mata'afa attended the Sunday service at the Kanana Fou Congregational Christian Church in Hawaii.

The Service Lead, Susuga Faifeau Toeaina Falelua Lafitaga, called to worship with a reading from Psalm 100: 1-3 and a congregational rendition of the "Holy, Holy, Holy" hymn. The Invocation was delivered by Susuga Faifeau Malaeotofiga Levaula, leader of the CCCAS Amataga Fou Church. The Scripture reading was provided by Susuga Faifeau Toeaina Fuamaila

Soa, leader of the Windward Samoa Congregational Christian Church of Waimanalo. The spiritual sermon was delivered by Susuga Faifeau Toeaina Falelua Lafitaga.

The sermon focused on an excerpt from Mark 7:15, 23: “Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them... All these evils come from inside and defile a person.” Jesus often used examples related to food because they were relatable to daily life. However, his teachings go far beyond mere sustenance. References to food in his teachings serve to capture the attention of readers and listeners. Those who attend religious services seek to uncover the deeper meaning and essence of Jesus' teachings regarding the kingdom of heaven.

“The teachings of Jesus encompass all aspects of life and surroundings.” Through stories about Jesus' teachings, Lafitaga integrated the cultural programs of Festpac and Heritage, emphasizing well-being and identity. Reflecting on his experience at the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture, he observed various nations uniting through song and dance, showcasing their identities, traditions, values, and beliefs. He cautioned against deceitful hearts and encouraged humility, urging attendees to uproot weaknesses and foster a new heart dedicated to stewardship and leadership in the *Fa'aSamoa* tradition. Reverend Elder Falelua Lafitaga shared an uplifting message with the audience: "*E pulea tatou nu'u i le loto mai le Atua.*" (Our communities are guided by the will of God), reminding everyone of the profound impact faith and divine guidance have on our collective journey.

As part of the Samoan Heritage Initiative Program, the event showcased the talents of various choirs. One of the highlights was the performance by the Amerika Samoa Choir, who had recently impressed audiences at the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture under the guidance of Mr. Pati Pati. The Choral group was provided with the opportunity to perform four selections towards the end of the service.

It was an uplifting atmosphere as choirs such as EFKAS Amataga Fou, EFKS Waimanalo, and EFKAS Kanana Fou filled the air with songs of spiritual significance. The performances were a testament to the deep-rooted cultural traditions that continue to thrive within the Samoan community.

The festivities continued with an evening program that began with an invocation by His Most Reverend Bishop Kolio Tumanuvao Etuale of the Diocese of Samoa-Pago Pago. He expressed gratitude to God for the gift of identity and culture bestowed upon the Samoan people, noting that their practices may seem ineffable to others. He emphasized that preserving and practicing one's culture and selflessly serving others is a testament to the upbringing and character of Samoans. The Bishop's message served as a heartfelt reminder to cherish and uphold our cultural

heritage and values, reflecting on the profound impact of faith and identity in shaping our community.

Honorable Governor Lemanu P.S. Mauga delivered his inspiring remarks, stating: “As we come together to celebrate our Samoan cultural heritage, we are reminded of the immense beauty and significance of our traditions, customs, and values. Our Samoan heritage is not just a part of our past; it’s a living, breathing force that shapes who we are and guides us into the future.”

Governor Lemanu further stated, “Our cultural heritage is like the ocean that surrounds our islands; vast, deep, and teeming with life. It’s in the rhythm of our dances, the beat of our drums, the melody of our songs, and the stories woven into our *tatau* and *malu*. It is in the warmth of our hospitality, the strength of our community bonds, and the reverence for our elders.” He closed with, “so, as we raise our voices *i le ta Gagana ma tatou siva ma pese, tu ma agaifanua, a’o la ta Aganu’u* (Expressing our connection to our land through language, dance, song, and traditional customs) and feast on the bounty of our land and sea, let us do so with pride in who we are and gratitude for the gift of our Samoan Cultural Heritage, *o le ta Faasinomaga ma i le Atua lena* (that is our God-given Identity).

Church Choirs across Hawaii united to showcase their heritage and language, celebrating unity and diversity. The participating churches included the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Maili Kai Samoan Ward, Sinoti Metotisi, Katoliko Samoa i Hawai’i EFKS Waimanalo, Lighthouse Outreach Center, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Waipahu Samoan Ward, EFKAS Amataga Fou, EFKAS Waianae, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Moanalua Samoan Ward, and EFKAS Kanana Fou. As the night unfolded, the attendees bore witness to the profound Samoan saying, “Samoa Muamua le Atua” underscoring the deep-rooted faith and cultural pride that resonated within the community.

The Samoan Heritage Initiative Program will continue with church groups showcasing performances that celebrate a variety of international cultures.

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