Religions of the Indentured Labourers

Indians arriving as indentured labourers were usually Hindus or Muslims and there were also some Sikhs (Singh n.d.). When Hindu labourers arrived in Fiji, the caste they identified with lost meaning. Many authorities on Indian indentured labour to Fiji have theorized that the caste system broke down because of the ritual pollution sustained on the voyage or because of the exploitative conditions of the plantations. However, Grieco argues that such explanations overlook the nature of the caste system as lived in India: there were in fact many caste systems, regionally constructed systems of interdependent and stratified social units that operated across single or a few villages. Indentured labour did not recruit labourers in terms of caste but contracted individuals from many different parts of India broadly in the north and the south (Grieco 1998). Thus, caste no longer had any value among migrants. Due to this early lack of differentiation, Indians socialized and attended religious festivals together, regardless of faith, but began to differentiate themselves from each other in the 1920s (Hock 2006).

After 1900, Punjabis and Gujaratis also arrived, but as free migrants. Most of the Punjabi migrants were Sikhs and thus retained their distinction from other north Indian groups. The Gujarati community has also remained distinct, especially after 1920 when more Gujaratis brought their families from India, and they were therefore more able to retain caste distinctions (Grieco 1998). A small proportion of Indian labourers and other immigrants were converted to Christianity, but most Indo-Fijians today practise non-Christian religions.

Hinduism

Hindu indentured labourers were more diverse in their religious beliefs than Muslims and followed a great variety of religious practices and traditions. Hock uses Somerville’s model of a three-tier Hinduism in Fiji:
1) Brahmin, marked by rites and prestige;
2) Ram-bhakti, marked by ‘devotion in an open fellowship’;
3) Secularist Hinduism, which simply accepts that in some sense ‘its underlying culture is Hindu’ (Somerville quoted in Hock 2006).

In response to Muslims establishing organizations and founding mosques in the 1920s, the Hindus competed to unite Hindu groups. The two most noted groups of this era were the Arya Samaj, which grew with the membership of newly-arrived Hindu activists and the Gujaratis, and the Sanatanis. Southern Indian groups tried to keep a distance from the conflicts between these groups and established their own educational societies. Hindu leaders continued in their attempts to unite Hindus throughout the 1930s, with conferences held across Fiji and the establishment of a centralized umbrella organization called the Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha (SDS), but the latter got under way only in the 1950s (Hock 2006).

Sikhs

The Sikh faith is an offshoot of Hinduism that renounces polytheism and the caste system. Most Sikh Indians came from the Punjab in northern India, arriving as indentured labourers from 1879 to 1917 in a bid to escape hard conditions at home, or as free labourers after 1900. While a number returned home after their contracts expired, others began to lease land as free cane-growers as early as 1906. The Sikhs scattered around coastal Viti

**Islam**

Muslims made up 14.6 per cent of the indentured labourers and came mostly from northern India. With the growing alienation between Hindus and Muslims in the 1920s, a number of small local Muslim groups amalgamated in 1926 to become the Fiji Muslim League, with the objective of safeguarding mainstream Sunni Muslim Indian interests against Hindus and also against Shi'i Muslims. In the 1920s, the followers of Ahmadiyya were vocal against Christians and Hindus and were actively engaged in proselytising other Muslims. They asked for and received missionaries from the Ahmadiyya Lahore movement, who arrived from India in the 1930s and, who, at one stage, nearly took over the Fiji Muslim League (Hock 2006).

**The Beginnings of North American Pentecostalism**

There were small early attempts to introduce Pentecostal ideas into Fiji early in the 20th century, but these were unsuccessful due to illness or because the missionaries left their posts or left Fiji. The first widely acknowledged mission of the Assemblies of God began in Fiji when missionaries arrived from the USA in 1926 (Larson 1997). However, most Pentecostal churches now in Fiji did not arrive until after Fiji’s independence in 1970. After the 1987 coups, there was a particularly big influx of Pentecostal missions (Mataca, 2005, interview by author), mostly from the USA but also from Australia and New Zealand.

**Contemporary Religious Situation in Fiji**

**Religious Affiliation in Fiji**

Broadly, churches in Fiji continue to attract followers along the lines of ethnicity. Most Indo-Fijians are Hindus or Muslims and most indigenous Fijians are Christian. An estimated 58.1 per cent of Fiji’s total population are Christian. The Methodist Church remains the largest church with 36.3 per cent of the total population.

**Religions in Fiji, 1996**

![Religious Affiliation Chart](image)

Compiled from data supplied by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 1996.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Fijians</th>
<th>Indians</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1420-1161</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Compiled from data supplied by the Bureau of Statistics, Fiji, 1996, and personal communication. [Spelling follows the Bureau's usage].

In percentages, over 30 years, the Methodist Church has fairly consistently remained about 93 per cent Fijian in its composition. However, despite its actual growth, this church has nonetheless been losing proportional representative power to alternative Christian denominations. In 1976, Methodists represented 73 per cent of the total Christian community (Fijians, Indo-Fijians, and others); in 1986, they represented 69 per cent of the total Christian community; and, in 1996, they represented only 62 per cent, thus losing 12 per cent of representational power to other Christian churches over 20 years. Moreover, in 1976, 78 per cent of all Fijians were Methodist; in 1986, 74 per cent of all Fijians were Methodist; and this was further eroded to 66.5 per cent in 1996. This suggests that some Fijians were being alienated from the dominant mainline church and that a significant break was being made from the values Methodism represents.
In the 10 years leading up to 1996, Fijians joined denominations such as the Apostolic Church, Baptists, Christian Mission Fellowship, Gospel Church, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Latter-day Saints and the Salvation Army for the first time. Of these, the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Christian Mission Fellowship (CMF) have been very successful. Even more so, the Assemblies of God (AOG) managed to attract about 12,000 additional followers in 10 years, although they still represent only 6.9 per cent of the total Christian community. However, these denominations have drawn their congregations mainly from the Methodist Church and are therefore perceived as a threat to the Methodists.

The number of Christian churches listed in the census clearly needs to be expanded. In the 1996 figures, while 105 people identified themselves as Presbyterian, there are nearly 13,000 other people identified simply as ‘Other Christians’. In the next census, the number of ‘Other Christians’ is likely to be vastly more than recorded in present statistics. Given the growth of churches like the Christian Outreach Centre (COC), the Christian Mission Fellowship (CMF), the All Nations Christian Fellowship, and the Apostles Gospel Outreach Fellowship International (AGOFI), the categories used by the Statistics Bureau need to be updated and extended to show the extent of religious change in Fiji more accurately (see section on individual churches). The two main umbrella organizations are the Fiji Council of Churches (FCC) and the Assembly of Christian Churches of Fiji (ACCF), which play important roles in the socio-cultural and political life of Fiji citizens (and particularly in the lives of indigenous Fijians; see section below on inter-church co-operation). However, with the current categories, the numbers of members belonging to each of these linking bodies cannot be ascertained.

Indo-Fijian Sanatanis (Santan in the table) are listed in the 1996 census as the largest Hindu group (Hock 2006), but they had lost nearly 47,000 Indo-Fijian adherents in the decade between 1986 and 1996. While sharing many of the concepts of mainstream Hinduism, the Arya Samaj has a rational doctrine that incorporates notions of ethical discipline in addition to specific forms of worship and focuses on education and religious preaching (Hock 2006), but, in the same decade, this group lost 4,000 adherents. Many of those who left the Sanatanis and Arya Samaj are likely to have emigrated after the 1987 coups or to have joined other religious organizations, either Hindu or Pentecostal.

Certainly, in the statistics, the only Hindu category that increased was ‘Other Hindus’, which signifies the emergence of a number of alternative Hindu organizations and possibly also a confusion in categories. One group to emerge that is yet unrepresented in the statistics is the Hare Krishna Movement or ISKCON (the International Society for the Promotion of Krishna Consciousness), which was first established in Lautoka, Fiji, in 1977. According to Hock, there are currently about 1,000 registered members (Hock 2006). On the other hand, Sri Sathya Sai Baba came to Fiji in 1969, on the eve of independence, but became official only with its affiliation with the international organization in 1988. It has 2,000 registered members, a number at odds with the number given by the Bureau of Statistics (60 in 1996, see above table). Such a divergence in numbers may reflect the fact that the organization does not see itself as a religious movement but as a service organization based upon principles for ethical conduct (Hock 2006).

Other religious groups seem to have been disregarded in the statistics until recently. For instance, Sikhs first appear in the 1996 statistics, but in fact they were among the indentured labourers and the free migrants who arrived at the turn of last century (see Religions of Indentured Labourers).
Muslim groups lost nearly 2,000 adherents between them in the decade from 1986 to 1996, when most identified themselves as Sunni Muslims (see above table). The numbers given for Ahmadiyya (Ahmadya in the table) are small but membership in this organization is quite stringent, and their reach into the community is considerably larger than these statistics reveal (Hock 2006).

Interestingly, those who represent themselves as having no religion for the purpose of the census nearly doubled in number from 1986 to 1996. It is difficult to ascertain how much of this is a growth in atheism, or whether it indicates a sense of new-found freedom to acknowledge one's atheism. With regard to the increasing number of Indo-Fijians identifying themselves as having no religion, some of the organizations they belong to are not considered religious bodies but rather ethical bodies (Hock 2006), which means that while Indo-Fijians may have joined these organizations they do not necessarily deem them to be religious.

**Inter-Church Co-operation**

The following section describes a variety of different organizations that attempt to work formally with a number of churches. Of these, the most newly emergent umbrella organization, the ACCF, has become increasingly important in its contribution to social and political life in Fiji. Because it is the umbrella group for many of the newly emerging churches and because little has been written about it to date, this organization is given more detailed attention than the other groups in this section. Mention is also made in this context of the Fiji Government's Ministry of Reconciliation and Unity.

**The Fiji Council of Churches (FCC)**

The Fiji Council of Churches was founded in 1964 by the Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Samoan Congregational Church. Later, the Roman Catholics, the Salvation Army and the Fiji Baptist Mission (known now as the Fiji Baptist Convention) also joined (Ernst 1994; see 'Profiles of the Major Churches in Fiji in 2005' below).

As an affiliate of the World Council of Churches, the FCC works from a constitution aimed at unifying Christians, fostering understanding with other religious traditions, and encouraging activism in social justice issues. Its support for interfaith activities is a key element in the negative view of the FCC held by many of the Pentecostal churches. Although Muslims and Hindus in Fiji suggest that they "are worshipping the same God but doing it a different way," most Pentecostal churches reject this, responding that Christians worship a different God and that Christ is the only way to him (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). Because of this stance, almost none of the Pentecostal churches have ever joined FCC. In fact, this issue is a source of contention even within the FCC itself, as both the Methodists and the Salvation Army refuse to participate in any interfaith service with Muslims or Hindus (Bryce 2002, interview by Ernst).

Since the 1987 coup, the FCC has had to deal with perceptions that it supports Fijian paramountcy, because it was discovered that the FCC office was used by the planners of the coup. Another problem has been that at various times key FCC staff members have all been Catholic or Methodist, which was interpreted as an indication that the Council was a Catholic or Methodist body. When the organization was headed by the Rev Tomasi Kanailagi, who was also head of the Methodist Church at that time, there were also problems of transparency and accountability. Three projects — on child rights; women, gender and culture; and peace, violence and reconciliation — were funded $8,000 each, but none were completed.
and none ever submitted a full report. When Benjamin Bhagwan became Acting Secretary in 2000, he felt that the FCC “had lost its effectiveness as a witnessing body for the Body of Christ” (Bhagwan 2002, interview by Ernst). People were not coming to meetings, and other organizations that did not belong to the FCC were using its facilities.

To change its direction and public image, the FCC worked with the Ministry of Reconciliation and Unity to publish a supplement in three languages delineating the organization’s history. A message of peace and goodwill was also translated and published in the Hindi paper, the Shanti Dutt. The FCC also initiated workshops (funded by the Ministry of Reconciliation and Unity) to educate religious leaders and counsellors and church communities about HIV/AIDS. When interviewed in 2002, Bhagwan had applied for funding to establish a mission for Christian youth, to strengthen the role of women, and to preach the gospel of family unity, particularly with regard to children’s rights. While a levy on member churches helps to finance such programmes, the FCC does not seek independent forms of income but finds ways to work within the restrictions of its budget (Bhagwan 2002, interview by Ernst).

The Assembly of Christian Churches of Fiji (ACCF)

After the 2000 coup, the Great Council of Chiefs and other leaders sought to unify the churches as a way of reconciling Fijians with one another. This led to the forming of the Assembly of Christian Churches (ACCF) on 8 July 2001. According to Rev. Jione Langi,

The ACCF was formed initially to bring harmony amongst the people during the coup — it was initiated by the Assemblies of God people who came to see the President of the Methodist Church and asked if he would call all the leaders of the Christian Churches in Fiji to come to a meeting in which everyone could contribute to a way forward in bringing people together and not to be divided in so many ways. These divisions have been evident amongst the Fijian people themselves. There have been so many divisions that people were worried that it might end up in a big civil war... If any of these smaller churches made the call, no one would listen; but they believed if the President of the Methodist Church of Fiji made this call, then all these churches would come. So they came and presented a kamanaga (polite term for tabua or whale’s tooth) in the Fijian protocol to ask the President to take this initiative (Langi 2002, interview by Ernst).

The creation of the ACCF in 2001 was also described as a “response to the fragmentation of indigenous communities by political parties” (Waqairatu, 2005, interview by author). With a deep concern about the future of Fiji, Methodists felt something was needed to unify Fijians, with the idea that this would lead to their peaceful treatment of other races. If this was not done, it was thought, the coups would continue. As to the reasons why the FCC could not take on this role, it is the view of the Rev Epeli Kanaimawi that the FCC’s Constitution required each church to apply for consideration, which was too tedious and time-consuming. Because the churches needed to respond quickly, the ACCF was formed, and the churches that were part of the FCC were invited to join the ACCF (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author). By contrast, Benjamin Bhagwan, the general secretary for the FCC, argues that the members of the ACCF wanted solidarity between Fijian Christians and were not interested in minority groups (Bhagwan 2002, interview by Ernst), which reflects the two distinctly different visions of the way Fiji should be governed (see section on government and politics).
At the time of the first meeting, when about 20 people representing different churches arrived to participate, it was decided to set up and register a new organization. Formed with the aim of uniting the Christian population in Fiji and converting the non-Christian population to Christianity (ACCF Review 2001), the ACCF was established with 14 members: the Methodist Church in Fiji, the Worldwide Church of God, the Assemblies of God, Apostles Gospel Outreach Fellowship International (AGOFI), Christian Mission Fellowship, the New Life Centre, the Gospel Church, Christian Outreach Centre, the Evangelical Fellowship of Fiji, All Nations Christian Fellowship, Faith Christian Fellowship, Grace Baptist Church and Apostles Gospel Outreach (Ministry of Reconciliation 2002). At first, the Constitution of the ACCF stipulated that whoever became President of the Methodist Church would also be President of the ACCF, and therefore the first President was Tomasi Kanailagi, who was also head of the FCC (Langi 2002, interview by Ernst). However, the ACCF no longer follows this policy, as the current chairman, Rev Ratu Epeli Kanaimawi, heads the Worldwide Church of God. The board executive includes members such as Pastor Matewai of the Christian Outreach Centre (Matewai 2005, interview by author), and the trustees include Rev Suliaso Kurulo of the Christian Mission Fellowship (Kurulo 2005, interview by author).

Taken from the speech of Moses as he stood on Mount Sinai proclaiming that “if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession” (Exodus 19:5), the ACCF’s vision statement for Fiji is that the country will become “God’s Treasured Possession” as a nation that honours and glorifies God, and its members must strive for that goal (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author). The mission statement has been further elaborated into four principles: all flocks must unite; members should live God’s way of love; leadership should be God-fearing; and Fiji should be reconciled for peace and prosperity. The last statement is drawn from II Corinthians 5:18, which describes God’s reconciliation to humanity through Christ. According to Kanaimawi, these principles have been revealed to the ACCF “to provide a practical framework for the attainment of peace and prosperity in this country” (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author).

In Kanaimawi’s view, the ACCF has allowed for churches, ministries, and para-churches to work together and “become a miniature body of Christ” (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author). Emerging Christian churches are not viewed as a threat, because they are all part of the body of Christ, where one may act as the eyes, another the hand, and so on, and therefore they all have a role in revitalising Christianity (Nakauyaca 2005, interview by author; Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author). Kanaimawi gives the example of peeling potatoes, where the hands must do the actual peeling but they need the eyes, and the feet may have to move to get another potato. In the same way, one church (the CMF) is given the task of inviting international evangelists such as Reinhard Bonnke (see below), because that church specializes in evangelism and the organization of big events. The ACCF then helps to provide the enormous number of counsellors and security people by asking all the member churches to bring in volunteers. Another organization, the Evangelical Fellowship, is called to heal the land in various villages. The ACCF is thus developing strategies in teamwork. In Kanaimawi’s words:

What we are beginning to find is that [the churches] come together like a body. The body has different parts and the different parts have different gifting and anointing. Some are very good at one thing and not others. When we bring them all together, they complement one another...

There is a particular church here under the Rev Vuniyani Nakauyaca (the Evangelical Fellowship
of Fiji). They are very skilled in the healing of the land. They go out to the village and get all the villagers, irrespective of what church they are, look at their problems, do a spiritual mapping, map out where the devil has been influential — whether it’s a killing field in one place or it’s where they worshipped demons in the past — and then they cleanse those out. Then the people repent for what they have done and ask God to come in and the whole village just transforms itself... I cannot do that... we really are not equipped for it and we just ask Vuniyani to go and do it for us when we find the need... So those are areas where we go to the churches that have that particular gifting and take care of those situations (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author).

Smaller churches emphasize the benefits of the alliance with bigger churches because of their ability to offer venues and so on (Wilson 2005, interview by author). Some have also noted that the ACCF is another way by which people who converted from the Methodist Church to the smaller denominations are able to return to participate in activities with the Methodist Church (Langi 2002, interview by Ernst). The members of the ACCF also have an agreement not to encourage people to shift from one church to another, although it seems that some feel that the All Nations group has not strictly adhered to this (Waqairaturu 2005, interview by author). AGOFI also mentions in its own publication that it has drawn many members from the AOG (AGOFI 2001).

Rather than seeing new religious movements as a threat, the perspective of the ACCF is that current Christian churches must adjust to the newcomers until all parties are able to work together. While some are only temporary visitors and others are attempting to establish a foothold in Fiji, all contribute to the whole body of Christ (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author). According to this view, a variety of Christian groups will be more successful in evangelism than just one because they will appeal to different kinds of people. In one religious leader’s words: “as every child needs its own placenta, every generation is unique and needs its own church” (Matewai 2005, interview by author). Further, according to Kanaimawi, the incoming groups are “a link for us to some greater things that God is preparing” (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author).

The Christian Mission Fellowship (CMF) is a driving force in the ACCF, as exemplified in the case of a visiting German evangelist, Reinhard Bonnke. A Pentecostal, Bonnke is well-known in Africa (particularly South Africa, Nigeria and the Sudan) for holding large-scale events involving miracle-working. Most noted for raising a man from the dead in Onitsha, Nigeria, in 2001, Bonnke arranges to meet with the president and the parliament in new countries he is visiting. He then holds campaigns preceded by mass send-outs of brochures, visits to local churches, telephone invitations, television spots, and hand-outs of especially embossed baseball caps. Bonnke’s popularity in Africa became such that football stadiums were often too small and, at one point, he was holding his crusades in a 30,000 seat tent (Kükischner-Pelkmann n.d.). Christian websites have reported him as attracting crowds as large as 1.3 million and 1.6 million to single events in Nigeria (World Bible Translation Centre 2003; crnews 2002; DAWN News 2000; Australian Christian Network, 2000). In Germany Bonnke read a story about the CMF’s evangelistic work in an indigenous community in the Solomon Islands, and telephoned the CMF’s Kurulo to arrange a meeting there. Kurulo invited him to come to Fiji to conduct a crusade (Kurulo 2005, interview by author).

Bonnke’s popularity is enhanced by the way he addresses contemporary concerns in a poetic rhetoric, as evidenced in one of his stories told during his Crusade to Fiji in 2003. In this story a man invites a preacher to his house, where he brings out a gun and begins to talk
about his life of sin, which included killing a friend, participating in robberies, selling alcohol and dealing drugs despite the imploring of his victims' wives, becoming an alcoholic and attacking his wife and eight year old daughter, Margaret, who fell into an open fire as a result. At every point in his story, the man asks the preacher if it is still true that his sins can be washed away. To every sin, the preacher replies, "It remains true. The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, washes us from every sin." As the story progresses, the man smashes his whisky bottles and destroys his drugs and then goes home, where his wife is preparing breakfast with his daughter:

The mother said to her daughter, "Margaret, please, tell Daddy breakfast is ready." Margaret was still in bandages. She was still scared, but she obeyed. She walked up and said, "Daddy, breakfast is ready." He looked around and said, "Margaret, my darling, tell mummy I don't want breakfast." Margaret ran quickly down and said, "Mummy, mummy, something has happened." The mother said, "What? What has happened?" She said, "Daddy called me darling!" "No," said the mother, "That's not possible. Since the day you were born, he never called you darling." "Yes, he did. He said, Margaret, my darling," Mother sent her up again. Margaret was confused but she walked up. When he saw his daughter come again, he grabbed her by the hand, put her on his right lap. His wife followed little Margaret and he saw his wife come. He pulled her down on his left lap and buried his head between them and started to cry, "Forgive me, forgive. I haven't been a husband. I've been a beast. I haven't been a father. I've been a devil. But this night, the blood of Jesus Christ has washed me from all my sins" (Bonnke 2003).

With this rendering of life-change and forgiveness in the family setting, Bonnke deals with everyday subjects, suggesting that one's relationship with God automatically changes the relationship with the family and the outside world. In the same Crusade meeting, Bonnke also related stories about his power to defeat witchcraft through prayer, a subject that has many resonances for both Africans and Fijians (Bonnke 2003). He then prayed for the sick and invited the healed to tell the story of their cure. In his meetings people are invited to confess Christ as their Saviour and are approached by counsellors, given a pamphlet about Bonnke, and a card is filled out in order that new converts can be visited afterwards (Kürschner-Pelkmann n.d.).

Because of the emergent tensions between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and Sudan during Bonnke's campaigns, his movement was becoming circumscribed and he relocated his headquarters to Germany. Although he won financial support from "mission partners" in Europe and North America, Bonnke's methods were less successful in Germany. German churches are critical of his methods of evangelism, his war-like language filled with notions of crusades and soldiers, and his statements that others who are not engaged in the same work or who are outside Christianity are engaging in the work of the devil (Kürschner-Pelkmann n.d.).

In Fiji, the CMF's Harvest Times reported that Bonnke attracted 55,000 people on the Friday, 85,000 on the Saturday, and 114,000 on the Sunday (Harvest Times 2003). These are significant numbers of people given that Fiji's total population is 800,000 (DFAT 2004–5). The Ministry of Reconciliation arranged an official dinner on his arrival, and he was also given a police escort to and from the airport, which was criticized by the media (Fiji Times, 20/9/03).

The ACFF, an umbrella church organization, and the state co-operated closely in ensuring that Bonnke's visit was successful. In answer to his critics, Kurulo argues that the ACCF simply approached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other departments and the
police to ask for protocols, a standard procedure of all churches and NGOs when arranging international visits (Kurulo 2005, interview by author). The head of the ACCF, Kanaimawi, goes further, claiming that the critical stance of *The Fiji Times* was the work of “Satanic forces using the media to destroy God’s work” (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author), a viewpoint in line with Bonnke’s own theology (Kurschner-Pelkmann n.d.). In response to the newspaper’s comments, the ACCF boycotted it for a month until the editor was sacked or transferred (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author; *The Christian Post*, 30/9/2003).

The CMF is now organizing the visit of another leading evangelist in early 2006. Their choice, Benny Hinn, also has a reputation for healing during large events and has also drawn a number of critics (e.g. Scheffler n.d.; Fisher and Goedelman 1997). However, Kurulo’s view is that these evangelists have different and special gifts from God, especially with regard to healing, which has helped people who have tried more orthodox medical treatments but have never found relief (Kurulo 2005, interview by author).

With regard to working across faiths, the chairman of ACCF, Kanaimawi, is very positive about this possibility, providing those faiths worship only one creator God; if the faith worships more than one god, he withdraws his interest. For him, working across faiths can be positive if it is about learning to understand one another, but, for very practical reasons, worshipping together will only fail. He points out that:

> For example, if I’m a Christian and if I belong to a denomination that believes in peaceful times of prayer and meditation in my worship, and then somebody says, “Let’s worship together,” and while I’m trying to meditate and worship quietly somebody is beating up the drum and shouting “Hallelujah, praise,” how do we become one in worship? Okay? It becomes difficult but that is within Christianity. Take it to the Hindus and take it to the Muslims where they bring a rug and put it on the ground, and, while they are doing that, you are jumping up and down next to them trying to — all you are doing is causing further division through trying to worship together, so I would not be for that. I am totally against it (Kanaimawi 2005a, interview by author).

Instead, he suggests, a more appropriate way of encouraging co-operation across faiths is to hold seminars to learn about the various traditions and what they stand for. Hearing that education is perceived as a form of worship for Hindus and that women are highly respected, Kanaimawi asked, “Why don’t we know more about this?” (Kanaimawi 2005a, interview by author).

Kanaimawi’s ideas, however, contrast with the views of many of the other churches in the ACCF, which are very negative about interfaith co-operation, particularly in worship. One leader expressed his scepticism about the idea that the same God is being worshipped (Lele 2005, interview by author), an idea prominent in Fiji’s Hindu and Muslim communities (Hock 2006). Another said that although the whole community should be embraced for secular projects regardless of faith, when it comes to worship God is jealous and cannot be worshipped alongside other gods. Further, interfaith prayer activities lead to competitive and judgemental attitudes among the participants, which are counterproductive (Kurulo 2005, interview by author). According to a third leader, although their followers are unaware of it, the Hindu and Muslim religions simply reinforce the kingdom of the enemy or the devil (Matewai 2005, interview by author).

While the FCC had a limited advisory role to government in restricting incoming churches before the 1987 coups, the ACCF is perceived to have become a political organization and think-tank for the Prime Minister. As it is asked to comment upon social and political issues larger than what the FCC has been consulted about, this advisory capacity
signals a major shift in the relationship between Christian churches and the political sphere (personal communication, Ernst 2005). The ACCF has the patronage of the President of Fiji and maintains close links with the Prime Minister (Ernst 2003) and the Ministry of Reconciliation (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author; Ministry of Reconciliation 2002). By its own admission, the ACCF works very closely with government, especially when that work corresponds with the work they believe they are commissioned to do. While critics question this relationship, the ACCF justifies it as furthering the project of reconciliation and healing between Fijians (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author), a stance which is itself critiqued by those who argue for ethnic equality (e.g. Bhagwan 2002, interview by Ernst). Critics suggest that many of the ACCF programmes such as the prayer breakfast, open air evangelism, and workshops that claim to promote reconciliation are funded by the government, a claim denied by the Ministry for Reconciliation and Unity which seeks to promote unity across race and religion (see next section on government).

For Kanaimawi, however, the idea of a Christian State, which is promulgated from time to time, is only appropriate if it means that people are free to practise their own religion in a Christian country where the laws of the nation are aligned with the laws of God. Pressuring people or removing this freedom from them is not, in Kanaimawi’s view, the way that God operates, because people have been given a free moral agency, although ideally there should be as much of God’s influence as possible in the way the country is run (Kanaimawi 2005b, interview by author).

Government

In the wake of the 2000 coup, in September that year the government established the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Unity, with three specific objectives:

i) to promote multi-racial harmony through appropriate cultural, social and economic programmes at neighbourhood, district and national levels;

ii) to promote unity amongst the indigenous Fijians through appropriate unity programmes at village, district, provincial and national levels;

iii) to promote understanding amongst religious organizations and unity within the Christian churches (Ministry of Reconciliation 2002:13).

The Ministry’s immediate tasks were to resettle families who had been displaced, but their wider focus included all families affected by criminal and racial violence after the coup, as well as Indo-Fijian families whose leases had not been renewed, some of whom had joined the squatter population (Ministry of Reconciliation 2002).

Deeply involved in working with the ACCF, the Ministry claims that the formation of that organization was important because its members represent “the most multi-racial organizations in the nation” (Ministry of Reconciliation 2002:17). As mentioned in the previous section, this represents a major shift in church-state relations. The Ministry also works directly with Hindu and Muslim organizations and Indo-Fijian schools, but notes that the leaders of Hindu and Muslim organizations have direct political representation in Parliament and therefore tend to participate only in religious ceremonies and not in other forms of reconciliation (Ministry of Reconciliation 2002).

As the year 2004 was the National Year of Prayer and Fasting, the Ministry of Reconciliation and Unity was particularly active. The National Day of Prayer was an enormous challenge for the Ministry, which organized programmes giving everybody (including members of the Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Bahá’í faiths) an opportunity
to pray together publicly. Opened by the President and closed by the Prime Minister, events were organized in Suva, Lautoka, Labasa and Levuka (Bainimarama 2005, interview by author). The notion of common worship was not well received by many of the Pentecostal churches, however, since they do not believe that they can share in worship with other religions (see section on ACCF). Non-Christians also criticized the programme as Christian-biased because it followed Christian practices of hymn-singing and collective prayer. Because of the difficulties with this, the Ministry of Reconciliation organized different slots for worship in the 2004 celebrations, in the Fiji Week celebration — which was apparently quite successful — and again in 2005 (Bainimarama 2005, interview by author). Unfortunately, in 2005, the turn-out was very poor (Fiji One News, 5/5/2005).

A budget is passed down to the Ministry every year. In 2004 it was $250,000 and in 2005 it should be double that (Bainimarama 2005, interview by author). With the priority of nation-building, the Ministry works with other government departments such as the Ministry for Education to promote a national language and to foster pride in the flag, national holidays, and the national anthem. On Fiji Day, 2002, the Ministry distributed 10,000 miniature flags and 5,000 miniature flyers printed with the words of the National Anthem in three languages (Ministry of Reconciliation 2002). It has also been providing weekly radio broadcasts on three separate shows, holding radio interviews, and conducting live talk-back shows. Cross-cultural radio programmes in Hindi are broadcast on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for 15 minutes in the mornings and afternoons. A half hour women’s programme is also broadcast on the radio in Fijian on every third Sunday of the month in the afternoon. Members of the Ministry are also sometimes invited to do talk-back radio (Bainimarama 2005, interview by author; Ministry of Reconciliation 2002). However, if the Reconciliation and Unity Bill is passed, the Ministry may be closed in favour of a Commission (Bale 2005).

Currently headed by Mrs Sereana Bainimarama, the Ministry also trains women, youth, vunua leaders and church leaders for leadership roles. While training sessions are organized in the villages, the Ministry is planning a youth programme during National Youth Week. Since leaders will speak to children in schools in this programme, it will also require interdepartmental co-operation and co-ordination with the Ministry of Education. Although not at present directly considered by her department, issues Bainimarama would like to see addressed include poverty, the impact of television on children, and family life. Another issue is the deployment of young Fijian soldiers in Iraq, which creates many social ills at home. Also, in her view, military remittances and Fiji National Provident Fund payments have exacerbated a hand-out mentality in the villages (Bainimarama 2005, interview by author).

**Other Forms**

**The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC)**

Established in 1961 at a conference in Western Samoa, by 1992 the Pacific Conference of Churches was comprised of 26 member churches. The organization is based in Suva, and several Fiji churches are members. PCC is socially active in matters of Christian education, communication, and programmes for women and youth. It has also been involved in political issues including the Bougainville crisis, nuclear testing, national independence and environmental issues, but is financially dependent on outside funds for most of its projects (Ernst 1994).
Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECREA)

Founded by the late Methodist minister, Rev Paula Niukula, this organization began as the Fiji Institute of Contextual Theology and was accepted into the Fiji Council of Churches in 1991. In late 2000, it became an autonomous body with its present name. ECREA is affiliated with the Asia-Pacific Research Network (APRN); the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC); the NGO Coalition on Human Rights, Jubilee South; and the Fiji Library Association (ECREA 2005). Its objectives are to create “a compassionate, just and inclusive society” (ECREA 2005) based on the concept of creating the Kingdom of God on earth, and it has become known for both its social activism and a humanistic position that is critical of some of the philosophies and theologies emerging in Christian churches in Fiji.

Profiles of the Major Churches in Fiji in 2005

This section explores some of the contemporary churches operating in Fiji. It is divided into three parts: the first wave of Christian churches, which arrived before or during the colonization of Fiji; post-independence churches, which emerged after 1970; and the churches that are outside of these histories, by virtue of their distinctive theologies (such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Latter-day Saints, and the Seventh-day Adventists).

Most of the churches mentioned in the first part are mainline churches, with the exception of the Assemblies of God (AOG), the earliest Pentecostal church to enter Fiji. According to the census statistics (see table on religious affiliation) all of these churches except the AOG are experiencing a proportional loss of numbers to the new churches, although the AOG is aware that it has lost a significant number of members during its restructuring process in recent years and since the last census (Tanoa 2005, interview by author).

The second part of this section reflects the particular emphasis of this study on the newly emerging churches that tend to identify themselves as part of the global Pentecostal/charismatic/evangelical movement rooted in North American Pentecostalism. Often initiated by individuals, these churches have dynamic leaders and achieve surprising growth in a short period of time. Their testimonies provide an insight into the reasons for the emergence of so many churches. It should be noted that while para-churches have also become a very important part of Fiji's religious landscape, they are not covered here.

The information below is based on interviews conducted with religious leaders from 2002 to 2005, web-sites, and local church literature.

The First Wave of Christian Churches

The Methodist Church in Fiji

The Methodist Church in Fiji is a member of the World Council of Churches, the World Methodist Council, the Fiji Council of Churches (FCC), the Assembly of Christian Churches of Fiji (ACCF), and the Pacific Conference of Churches. It also works cooperatively with the Methodist Church of New Zealand, and the Uniting Church in Australia (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). It thus belongs to a variety of networks both inside and outside Fiji, although sometimes the values of these organizations are in competition and even in conflict with each other. One example of this is the idea of co-operating across
faiths, which several organizations including the World Council of Churches and the Fiji Council of Churches uphold, as opposed to the ACCF’s distinctly exclusive focus on Christian churches (see section on the ACCF).

Another perhaps deeper internal tension is the fact that the Methodist Church is the traditional church for indigenous Fijians yet the church also incorporates an Indian Division. In 2003, there were 47 divisions and 250 circuits, but only one division covers the Indo-Fijian adherents wherever they live, which tends to be on Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Taveuni and in Levuka (Reuben 2002, interview by Ernst). The Indian Division began as a mission aimed at converting the indentured Indian labourers, and was an arm of the Methodist Church of Australasia which included Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Australia and New Zealand. Eventually the Mission became a Synod until the Methodist Church in Fiji gained its independence from Australasia, when it became one of six divisions. The Indian Division provides Hindi services throughout Fiji. Despite the fact that the Superintendent of the Indian Division, the Rev Immanuel Reuben, claims that the Methodist Church treats all races fairly, he is one of 43 superintendents and the only Indian, and there has only been one Indo-Fijian President, the Rev Daniel Mastapha, who presided over the church in 1978 (Reuben 2002, interview by Ernst).

Perhaps surprisingly, many Indo-Fijians turned to the Methodist Church for refuge at the time of the 1987 coups, but became discouraged and left when the Sunday decree was instituted. According to Reuben, they became disheartened by the fact that the Methodist Church appeared to have become a ‘toothless tiger’ in the face of Fijian aspirations (Reuben 2002, interview by Ernst). While many left the church altogether, 3,000 Indian Methodists migrated and formed Indo-Fijian Methodist congregations in countries all over the world, including Canada, the USA, New Zealand, and Australia.

The church's vision statement reflects these tensions, as it declares that the Methodist Church must aim to fulfil the Kingdom of God in Fiji and therefore God’s rule, which is “the unification and salvation of all people,” including Methodists and non-Christians like Muslims and Hindus. The Kingdom of God must manifest itself in all spheres of this world, including the political and the economic. Therefore, according to the Assistant General Secretary, Rev Tuikilakila Waqairatu, the church's stand on politics is very clear: it supports the government of the day when the government's actions correspond with the teaching of the church, and it must stand against governments, regardless of their ethnic composition, that go against its teachings. Because the Prime Minister is Fijian, a prominent member of the Methodist Church and supportive of the church's work, the church leadership must take care not to passively accept the dictates of the state. However, the Methodist Church does support the Reconciliation and Unity Bill because the proposed legislation uses Fijian traditions as instruments of peace-building and reconciliation (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). It is clear that while it is a church for all ethnicities, Methodism in Fiji is primarily constructed through the lens of indigenous Fijian culture.

This Fijian construction of Methodism arises from the history of the church. As discussed in a previous section, Methodism was the first Christian denomination to convert large numbers of Fijians. Following Cakobau’s conversion in 1854, there was widespread acceptance of the new religion as villagers followed the religion of their chiefs. Introduced from the top down, Methodism has since been closely associated with the chiefly system. According to Waqairatu, the closeness of the chiefs to the Methodist Church sometimes creates misunderstandings with regard to the way decisions that concern the church are made:
We know that the Methodist Church belongs to God. It does not belong to the chiefs, but that's practically what happened in history when the Methodist Church came to stabilize itself. It worked with chiefs through the chiefs' way. This is why the church is still closely doing things with the chiefs. Most of the prominent chiefs called the Turaga Bale in Fiji are still Methodists. We are also at the same time experiencing and harvesting the good and bad part of that model: the good part because we have some chiefs who are really committed Christians really supporting the church; the bad part is that most or some of them would like to see that their power is reckoned by the church, and sometimes they overpower, overstepping the power or the jurisdiction of the minister within the circuit (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

In some circuits, for example, Fijians who are members of the village council (tikina) and lay members of the church sometimes then assume that they are qualified to make decisions on church matters that come before the council, although they are not theologically qualified. Waqairatu gave the example of a project to collect money for a new church: opinions may differ about whether the tikina or the church leaders have the final say (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

Nonetheless, the Methodist Church maintains the chiefly ways of understanding hierarchy. For instance, Waqairatu explained, one of the important values in traditional Fijian life that fits well with Methodist teaching is the child's understanding of his or her place in the extended family and community, where community equals life or death. One of the aspects of this is the way in which the old bure were built. Because the posts of the bure represent families and their specific relationships to the chief, the very structure reminds all members of their position and dictates where they can sit. As the commoners and the chief pass through different doors, there is never any confusion as to the hierarchy in the village (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). This same sense of hierarchy is built into the church. In the villages, Methodist churches tend to be built on the highest piece of land or in the centre of the village. Chiefs often sit at the front of the church as the service takes place (Newland 2004).

The largest Christian church in Fiji, the Methodist Church is also the most bureaucratic. There is an established set of processes for making decisions (leaders' meeting, quarterly meeting, and annual conference). While this means decision making takes longer than in other smaller churches, it is also seen as resulting in more consistent decisions (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

Training is the largest expense incurred by Head Office, coming to about F$648,000 in 2004 (Reuben 2002, interview by Ernst). To be ordained, ministers must finish three years of studies in the Theological College and three years of practical training with monthly assignments that must be completed. If students are married, they are given quarters, small allowances and a piece of land for planting food. Single students live in dormitories with food allowances and pocket money. They may also receive allowances according to rank. Three programmes are offered at the Theological College: the three year diploma; the Bachelor of Divinity for which they can be selected after ordination; and the Bachelor of Ministry. On completion of their training, ministers are paid a basic salary of F$3,000 per annum, regardless of rank (Langi 2002, interview by Ernst; Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

While a decade ago the Methodist Church in Fiji was sending missionaries to places like Central America, it now has far fewer missionaries. They are located in places such as the Northern Territory of Australia, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. There are also ministers working in the Methodist Church in Australia, New Zealand, England,
and the United States, although these too have become fewer in number (Langi 2002, interview by Ernst). Missionaries sent to Australia minister only to Fijians and Aborigines (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

The church runs a bookshop and is in the process of obtaining a radio station in order to reach its rural constituents. It currently spends $37,000 per year on broadcasting three times a week in a slot with the TBN Christian station (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). These activities are financed by vakamisionari, a levy of $10 per head per annum (including children) which is sent to the central office. The present system was instituted in 2002 as an improvement on the old way of collecting money, which involved paying the Head Office $5.00 per annum plus a dollar to all the fellowships (women’s, men’s, youth, Sunday School), as well as a number of other payments (Reuben 2002, interview by Ernst; Langi 2002, interview by Ernst). Methodists are also asked to pay a 10 per cent tithe to their local church, as well as pledges and free-will offerings. While these latter payments are all voluntary and many do not pay tithes (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author; Reuben 2002, interview by Ernst), some members have left the church because the financial obligations are felt to be a burden. The Methodist Church is commonly seen as the most expensive and least transparent in its financial dealings (personal communication, Ernst, 2005).

Of the $2,890,000 that was raised in 2004 for the Head Office, $2,100,000 came from Conference levies. Another 10–20 million dollars were raised within the 48 divisions for their own use (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). Head office income is managed through a trust fund and a fund set up for the salaries of ministers. Further income is generated through investment in property (Epworth House and Rev. John Hunt House), the bazaar or solevu held at the time of the annual conference, and the choir festival. Head Office formerly also obtained funds from the Australian Uniting Church, but this practice ceased during the coups of 1987 (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author), when problems of accountability surfaced in relation to the misappropriation of over F$1 million contributed by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Ernst 1994). The Uniting Church in Australia now favours directly funding discrete projects, and these tend to focus on the Indian Division (Langi 2002, interview by Ernst; Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). While financial accounts have caused the Methodist Church trouble in the past (e.g. Fiji Times, 16/9/03:1; Daily Post, 20/9/03:35), the church now hires KPMG to audit its accounts and present the findings in a financial report at the annual conference (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

According to Fijian leaders in the Methodist Church, key social issues of current concern in the church are HIV/AIDS, drugs (in particular, marijuana), unemployment, children leaving school, prostitution, and broken homes (Langi 2002, interview by Ernst; Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). The family — its spirituality, morality, financial status, education, and employment — is viewed as central to these issues. The family is asked now to be responsible not only for educating its children but for preparing them for employment. Parents are asked to take the initiative and not to rely on the private sector or the government (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

Unemployment is perceived as a major problem simply because of the number of young people who are graduating from school every year and for whom there is no structured job. According to Waqairatu, addressing unemployment is crucial because it is related to other issues like drugs, HIV/AIDS, and shop-breaking. Squatters provide a particular problem
in this regard because they do not have the resources to help their children, but Waqairatu believes they can be counselled to make decisions that might include the option of returning to their villages, since “every Fijian has land” (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). Squatters can also be assisted to set up home businesses and industries. One example is the home-baking that has been encouraged in Labasa and Seaqaqa. In Waqairatu’s view, the root of such problems is spiritual, which is exacerbated by ignorance. People must be taught how to manage their lives with the resources that they have, which includes managing the size of their families. One example he used was a squatter family with six children, whom they cannot afford to educate. Waqairatu sees such cases as a failure of the church, the government and the vunua to guide the people (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

To counter some of these problems, the Methodist Church has a department of social services and runs the Ba Veilomani Boys Home, Dilkusha Girls Orphanage and a programme for prostitutes called the Viti Concern. It formerly also ran the Ba Hospital, which is now operated jointly with the Government (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

Moreover, every year, the Methodist Church holds a rally in Davuilevu, where ministers are trained. This draws young people — sometimes as many as 1,800 — from the 48 divisions in Fiji. At these rallies, youth are given Christian teaching about marriage preparation, spirituality and contemporary issues like unemployment. Preparation for marriage is emphasized to try and prevent conflict that leads to divorce. A major conflict in marriage for indigenous Fijians is the tension between the obligations of the extended family and the newer emphasis on husband-wife relations. Fijian men are prone to prioritising their mothers’ perspectives over their wives’, which causes conflict in contemporary marriages (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

With regard to family issues, the Methodist Church supports the work of the Women’s Crisis Centre in issues of domestic violence and incest. In violent relationships, the couple must be counselled so that they learn to talk to each other, and encouraged to use the Christian teachings of love, forgiveness, and acceptance. However, in some situations, one or both partners do not want to “bow down” because they may come from chiefly families, or commoners may have deep-rooted psychological problems from their early family life. Therefore, while never desirable, sometimes divorce is the only practical solution. According to Waqairatu, the family is at the centre of these problems and therefore must be revitalized. Children have to be well-taught in order to love themselves, their neighbours, and to treat everyone fairly. The church teaches these values through its Social Services, Christian Citizenship, Women’s Fellowship and Youth Fellowship (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

As part of the focus on the nuclear family, the Methodist Church condemns homosexuality and during this study in 2005 was actively engaging in demonstrations against tolerance towards homosexuality as recommended by the nation’s Constitution. Drawing on the creation story in Genesis, Waqairatu argues that sex is for procreation within marriage and therefore homosexuality abuses God’s purposes for sex. However, when a heterosexual couple cannot have children, they can still experience sexual pleasure with each other and fulfil the purpose of marriage, providing they are married (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

In an interview conducted in 2002, at a time when a number of leases were expiring, the Indian Superintendent, Rev Immanuel Reuben, talked of different priorities he wanted the Methodist Church to address:
The most pressing issue is the use and sharing of land. We find leases are expiring and no one is to be blamed for that because it was an agreement made years ago, but the thing is that leases are expiring and the land is left idle, and Indians and Fijians, when their leases are expired, go and squat in unhygienic places and live in poverty. The most pressing issue that the government and the church should address together is the issue of land (Reuben 2002, interview by Ernst).

According to Reuben, the Methodist Church does not involve itself in this issue because "they think the land belongs to them [the Fijians] and no one else" (Reuben 2002, interview by Ernst). To put it another way, by far the majority of members in the Methodist Church are indigenous Fijian who own land communally and are registered in their mataqali with the Native Lands Trust Board. As Fijians are landlords and as they constitute the majority of Methodists, the Methodist Church has no collective interest in addressing the problem of expiring leases.

As discussed in previous sections, the Methodist Church has remained the dominant church in Fiji, with 66 per cent of Christians identifying themselves in the 1996 census as Methodist. However, the Methodist Church has also been the most severely affected by new Christian movements and has periodically called for the State to limit the number of churches entering Fiji (e.g. Fiji Times, 13/8/03:1). While one interpretation of the Methodist interest in supporting the creation of the ACCF is that this was a potential way of stemming the outward flow of members (and hence the agreement not to 'steal' members: see section on the ACCF above), it has also been noted that the ACCF is another way by which people belonging to smaller denominations are able to return to participate in activities with the Methodist Church (Langi 2002, interview by Ernst).

Perceptions as to why the Methodist Church is experiencing a decline in numbers are that the church has burdened its members financially; that young people view the Pentecostal style as attractive; that villagers may have a disagreement with the talatala (minister) about biblical interpretation or about practices such as drinking kava or smoking. Excessive consumption of kava has come under intense scrutiny because, as Waqairatu noted, "everybody drinks — the talatala drinks, the men drink, and now the women and youth are taking kava" (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author; Newland 2004). He also acknowledges, however, that the Methodist Church has been slow to address the kava drinking issue.

Methodist women commonly move to other churches, despite the fact that, according to Waqairatu, the Women's Fellowship is "the liveliest group in the church," that women can be full members of the conference and the standing committee, and that women may now become ministers (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). This movement of women to other churches is troubling because they then influence their husbands to follow them (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author; Newland, 2004). Because this has sometimes resulted in marital conflict and separation, Waqairatu counsels couples to move together rather than separately to new churches (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author).

Competition from the Pentecostal churches has challenged the Methodist Church to work on renewing and modifying its worship practices. Because so many young people are now exposed to other churches and the exciting services they run, they feel the Methodist services are dull in comparison, and therefore some Methodist congregations, such as Wesley Church and Dudley Church in Suva are now experimenting with musical styles (Waqairatu 2005, interview by author). Some Methodist congregations are indeed quite charismatic in their worship style, and accept the concept of being 'born again' (Reuben 2002, interview by Ernst).