

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE FREE WESLEYAN CHURCH OF TONGA AND THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

God is one and it is the desire of God that all may be one. A relationship of mutual partnership is an expression of this desire for oneness. It is our commitment to work together in God's Mission in the World.

We acknowledge the special relationship between people of the Methodist tradition. A key part of this tradition is the understanding that Methodist circuits (congregations) in one country are in connexion (are connected together) through a Conference and other appropriate organisational means. Internationally the Conferences in individual countries are in connexion through the World Methodist Council and other organisational means. As a consequence of this understanding we believe that:

- The Methodist Church in Tonga is now found in the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, and
- That the Methodist Church in Australia is now found in the Uniting Church in Australia (previously the Methodist Church of Australasia).

We celebrate and give thanks for the long relationship between the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga and the Uniting Church in Australia. We have worked together in God's mission in both our countries and in many parts of the Pacific. It is our intention to continue to work in partnership in God's Mission as the Spirit of God leads us.

We confess the past failures in our relationship. Through misunderstanding, insensitivity, and human self-interest we have hurt each other. We claim the forgiveness of God made available to us in Jesus Christ. May our hearts and minds be renewed so that we may express the fullness of God's love in our relationship.

We recognise the differences between the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga and the Uniting Church in Australia that originate from our different contexts, history and the specific leading of God. Both churches will respect each other by accepting our differences including; theological emphases, ministry practice, polity, processes of organisation, and means of oversight. We will seek ways that sensitively handle these differences so that our relationship is sustained and strengthened.

For us a critical part of our relationship will be the deep care that we provide to people originally from one church now living in the country of the other church. We acknowledge that this care will be expressed mutually and in ways recognised and/or agreed between our two churches.

This agreement seeks to express the enduring and deep relationship between the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga and the Uniting Church in Australia. We will, beyond the words of this agreement, seek to continue to express a relationship of deep communion based on trust, sensitive respect and understanding.

We know that the way will not always be clear sailing but we will seek to sail together. We will be able to continue our journey together because all that we do is done in the presence of our Almighty and ever-present God. We open ourselves to God to sustain and guide us on the way. We pray that the wind of God's Holy Spirit will fill our sails and the energy of the Spirit will fuel our motors as we travel the waters of the new millennium, participants in God's mission.

March 10, 2004