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Governor Lemanu and First Lady Ella and Staff Join the Samoan Community and Toa o Samoa and Their Families in Worship at the Samoa Congregation in Washington, D.C.



It was Communion Sunday on February 5, 2023, and the Samoan Congregation at Joint Base Meyer–Henderson Hall hosted a church service and to’ona’i to welcome Governor Lemanu, First Lady Ella Mauga, and the American Samoa delegation to the DMV (DC, Maryland, Virginia) area.

Governor Lemanu and his team were in Washington, DC for the annual National Governors Association (NGA) Winter Meeting and the Interagency Group on Insular Areas (IGIA) meeting led jointly by the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the White House.

Also, in attendance at the church service were Congresswoman Uifa’atali Amata Radewagen, the full Chaplaincy leadership of the Washington District which includes Joint Base

Myer-Henderson Hall, and the Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa in DMV to witness the wonderful preparation by the Samoan Congregation. Several military individuals and families from neighboring military installations traveled 3 to 4 hours to take part in the Sunday gathering.

Deacon Faleafaga Petelo Mareko, a retired Sergeant First Class (SFC) from the US Army and Ta'ita'ifono of the Samoan Congregation spoke on behalf of the community and Toa o Samoa to welcome the Governor and everyone in attendance. The church service was led by *Pastor* Fa'itafa Burrell of the Samoan Congregation including the delivery of the sermon and Communion. The scripture reading was by Lay Preacher Vaueli Ta'ala of the CCCAS of DMV.

Following the worship service, the Samoan Congregation hosted Governor Lemanu and the American Samoa team and everyone who attended a luncheon at the Patton Hall on Joint Base Ft. Myer-Henderson Hall. Governor Lemanu was given the opportunity to address the gathering and crowd. He thanked the Washington District Chaplaincy leaders for their support of the Samoan Congregation at Ft. Myer where the Samoan military members and their families worship and fellowship every Sunday in their native language and culture. He also thanked the leaders of the Samoan community and *fa'afeagaiga* who helped organize the get together. Governor Lemanu acknowledged the active-duty members and congratulated Lotofa'ae'e LTC Sapa Ta'amu for his promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army just a few days earlier. The audience was filled with Veterans – Samoans who have retired from the military and are now established in Washington D.C, Maryland, and Virginia. Governor Lemanu recognized the Veterans and thanked all active and retired members for their services.

At the end of the Luncheon, Governor Lemanu led a panel discussion where the following questions were discussed:

- Is there a plan to improve the services at LBJ?
- Is there a plan in place to recruit more Doctors or medical specialists for LBJ?
- Why does ASG always recruit nurses from Fiji?
- Any negotiations on getting another airline to fly to American Samoa?
- What can ASG do for U.S. nationals who live off-Island for more than 2 years and cannot vote? Voter ID renewal can only be done in person and airfare is not cheap to go home to register.
- What is ASG doing to help support our nurses?
- Why is an (800) phone number not available in American Samoa? It's costly to call home.
- What can ASG do to help US nationals who have lived in the US for many years to become US citizens?

Governor Lemanu presented cases of tuna for the Chaplaincy, the congregations, and the military individuals and families that were present. He reassured the audience that the current

administration continues to seek out resources to support the economic development and future success of American Samoa. Governor Lemanu thanked the community again and expressed his blessing upon those in attendance and their families.

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