

## Fact sheet: *membership rolls*

### Methodist Church of New Zealand Archives National Archive of the Methodist Church of New Zealand

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### Membership rolls

In the beginnings of Methodism in England, John Wesley divided local societies (congregations) into Classes which met weekly for fellowship and the study of scripture. A Class book was kept recording their attendance and their contribution to the funds. When Membership rolls started being used to record names of those attending, the very early ones begin with a list of Class members.

Members were defined as those who had been baptised, received instruction in Methodist governance, and at a special service, were received into "full membership". Others in the congregation were called "adherents" and although they supported the activities of the Church as fully as Members, they did not enjoy voting rights.

Membership rolls are large registers set out in a columns and record a person's affiliation to a specific Methodist Church or Parish (Circuit).

When using these records for historical research, particularly in finding out about family members, they can also provide evidence that the person was accepted into the Methodist faith.

The *Methodist Law Book* governs the conditions under which names are recorded.

Membership rolls are part of the Parish Archives Collection in the Methodist Church of New Zealand Archives. The name of the Church or Parish needs to be known before rolls can be searched as rolls have not been indexed.

Another Methodist form of recording membership was Class rolls or Class lists. These often pre-date membership rolls. These Class rolls are different to Sunday School attendance rolls.

In 1893, the Wesleyan Conference decreed that all circuits (parishes) should keep membership rolls. Conference also ordered volumes to be pre-printed with headings to record relevant information. This decree applied to the Wesleyan Church, United Methodist Free Church, and Bible Christian Church. The Primitive Methodist Church already kept membership information.

Sometimes rolls were kept at a circuit or parish level, sometimes large churches had their own roll.

Membership rolls can be frustrating for family history research, as in some cases, family members attended a particular church, but did not choose to be received into full membership, and thus do not have their names recorded on roll.

Rolls were supposed to be updated each quarter and can record date of transfer to other parishes and sometimes the date of death.

They record the date and place where a person became a member, name, marital status (m=married, s=single, w=widowed), where people came from and the date. Other columns were used to record numbers of members in a quarter and these statistics were reported to the Methodist Conference.

### Reciprocal membership

1951 the Presbyterian General Assembly, the Methodist Conference and the Assembly of the Congregational Union declared their willingness to accept into membership members from the other two churches. (Joint Standing Committee on Church Union, pamphlet *Reciprocal membership*, December 1961).

### Membership tickets

These started being issued quarterly and examples are held in our Personal Papers and Historical Records Collection. Quarterly tickets gradually fell into disuse and annual membership tickets became the norm. For many years they carried a text chosen by the President of Conference each year.

### Removal notices

Each church or parish had a pre-printed book with two forms to a page and a remaining butt. This was filled in when a member was moving from the parish. If the destination was known, a copy of the removal notice was sent to the minister of the nearest Methodist Church and the other given to the person who was moving.

People coming from overseas were given removal notices from their minister which could be used as a means of introduction to any Methodist Church in New Zealand.

Year	Place	Name	Address	Marital Status	When Received	Where Received
1870	Belfast	Henry Johnstone	Grey Street	W.	1871	Thames
1878	York	Jane Bentley	Queen Street	M.	1879	York
1881	Nelson	Frank Evans	Victoria Street	S.	1882	New Plymouth
1883	Hastings	Emma Rolles	Arthur Street	M.	1887	London
1887	Dunedin	William Hunter	Church Street	S.	1889	Dunedin
1873	Glasgow	Alexander Scott	Princes Street	M.	1891	Timaru
1891	Orehunga	William Doyle	Waters Street	S.	1892	Orehunga
1913	Christchurch	James Williams	Rhodes Street	S.	—	—