

Waihi Wesley Church 1954

Foreward

By Mr J. B. Beeche.

With thankfulness to God for His goodness, and with grateful remembrance of the devoted lives and faithful service of those we seek to honour, we approach the 60th Anniversary of the appointment of the first Methodist minister to Waihi. By the perusal of available records, unfortunately far from complete, and by much research, we are able to produce this brochure. It was 18 years earlier, in 1878, that gold was discovered at Waihi in the world-famed outcrop of the Martha Reef, although real development came years later. By 1896 the Waihi (Martha) and Silverton mines were bullion producers, the Union and Silverton batteries operating- at full capacity. The Victoria battery at Waikino had not yet been erected. A township had sprung up and was growing rapidly, Bullion in ever-increasing quantity was being won. (The peak production was reached in 1909 at £959,594, from 416,813 tons of ore.)

The Waihi Plains were barren except for stunted tea-tree. In contrast the surrounding hills were forest-clad almost to the edge of the township. Access was by road only, all transport being horse-drawn, and approaching Waihi the road became a winding series of tracks.

Life and interest of everyone centred around the mines. (Whether actively engaged in mining or in subsidiary industries and trades, it was the gold from the mines that provided for all.) Men's hopes were justifiably high; the future was diffused with gold. Thus it was that Primitive Methodists and Wesleyan Methodists, as separate bodies, true to their tradition, each built a Church wherein to worship God. They knew the value of the gold of the earth, but they knew also the value of the sold of the heavenly kingdom in the hearts and lives of men.

We accord the chief place of honour to those ministers and lay-men and women, to whom after 60 years we acknowledge our in-debtedness, and also to all those who in early years followed in their train. Throughout the years the mines within the Borough of Waihi have produced wealth, the Martha Mine alone during its working life of 61 years having produced gold and silver to the value of £28,496,011. However, largely owing to the exhaustion of ore reserves, goldmining is no more.

But with the development of farming and secondary industries Waihi is enjoying a stability unknown before.

The following record of the past, though incomplete, will, we trust, awaken memories, do honour to those to whom honour is due, give to us all a higher appreciation of the heritage that is ours, and encourage us all to walk more worthily of the high vocation to which, in the mercy of God, and through Methodism, we are called.

Greetings

From the Rev. George P. Hunt, Primitive Methodist Minister, 1896:

Greeting's, Congratulations, Best Wishes

It was in November, 1895, that I first saw Waihi. I came from Manawatu at the request of the Rev. F. W. Boys, of the Thames—just a raw recruit for the Christian ministry. Although—inadequately equipped and quite inexperienced, I attempted the great task of missioning the Waihi goldfields for the Primitive Methodist Church. I visited and preached at Waihi, Katikati, Karangahake, Waitekauri, Golden Cross, St Hippo and Komata. I found the work difficult, but inspiring, and, believing that the call to difficult service was God's mark of confidence, I was happy in the Grace of God. It was worthwhile. Gold that endureth was found and won for God to Whom be praise! Continue ye in this Grace!

From the Rev. John W. Burton, M.A., D.D., former President-General of the Methodist Church of Australia:

In 1897, nearly 60 years ago, a young, inexperienced probationer, fresh from college, was appointed second minister in the Upper Thames circuit, and came to reside at Paeroa. He still marvels at the kindness and forbearance extended to this raw youth.

Waihi was one of the outposts to which I travelled on horseback over atrocious roads. The thing that stands out in memory was the devotion, loyalty and gracious hospitality of the few members of the church. While you honour the pioneer ministers, you will not forget, I am sure, that noble band of laymen and women who were the real founders of the church in Waihi.

I send you my warm greetings and hope and pray that succeeding generations will be no less devoted and loyal than were their honoured forbears. May God richly bless you all in the coming years.

From the Rev. W. Beckett, Wesleyan Minister, 1898:

Thou shalt remember—an old-time commandment! Yet one we are called to now and again.

My ministry began at Waihi, and well do I remember the kind folk of the gold-mining town. Two new churches, Waihi and Karangahake, were opened for worship on the same day. My good fortune was to be appointed to Waihi, where there were good, earnest Methodists. Cornish blood flowed in many of them. I found board and lodging with Mr and Mrs Robert Trembath, and they treated me in good Cornish style. Robert Trembath was a working miner in the famous Martha Mine and a good type of churchman. Congregations were good—mostly a full church—and the singing hearty;

the week-night prayer meeting was well attended. The prayers offered were fervent; many of the expressions used I still remember: one, "Lord, send us reality."

May God abundantly bless you, and may the next 60 years be even greater than the first.



Mr. and Mrs. Trembath



Rev. W. Beckett

Wesleyan Methodism 1891-1912

"In 1891 irregular services were held in the Central schoolroom. The Rev. Jno. Law then stationed at Te Aroha, officiating, Waihi then being in the Te Aroha Circuit. Subsequently Mr Trembath called a public meeting and an endeavour was made to erect a hall. Subscriptions were promised and other efforts made, and what is now called St. James' Hall was erected in which representatives of different denominations held services. In the year (1897) when Rev. S. Griffith was the superintendent of the Te Aroha Circuit, Mrs Chapman offered the site in Haszard Street and on 13th April, 1898, a church was erected (the Presbyterians contributing £30 as an acknowledgement of what Methodists had done in the erection of St. James' Hall, and Mr Shepherd Alen £50). On May 10th, 1914, the Renovated Church was re-opened by the Rev. T. G. Carr, superintendent of Waihi Circuit."

In these words Mr Carr recorded a "*Brief History of Waihi Methodism*" up to the time of the Union, thus providing the only known record of the earliest days of Wesleyan witness in the town. Much as we would like to better know some of those who held "irregular services" in the days following the opening up of the Waihi goldfield in 1891, we must be content with the assumption that they were faithful preachers of the Upper Thames Circuit in which the Waihi society was included until 1909. The superintendent of the circuit lived at Te Aroha, with assistants at Paeroa, Waihi and later Karangahake, Waitekauri and Morrinsville. We know that in 1901 the circuit, extending from Mamaku to Golden Cross and Waihi, had about 26 preaching places, including four churches, three ministers, two home missionaries, and about 20 local preachers, the youngest of whom has assisted in the preparation of this brochure.

The mention of Mr W. Shepherd Allen is of special interest. Dr. Morley in "*History of Methodism in New Zealand*" (1900) pays a glowing tribute to this "notable worker" thus: "It was largely by the ready and voluntary labour of himself, sons and employees that services were originated at Karangahake, Waihi, etc., and chiefly through his liberal help that two junior ministers in the circuit have been employed."

At that times the Waihi portion of the circuit included the following preaching places, in addition to the church at Waihi: Waitekauri, Golden Cross, Owharoa and Waikino.

The rapid growth of Waihi made necessary an early appointment. Rev. Wm. Beckett came from Prince Albert College, Auckland, in May, 1898, as the first Wesleyan minister appointed to the goldfield town. The day after his arrival the Waihi Church was opened for worship. Mr W. Tetley, of Paeroa, was architect for this, and the Karangahake Church, which was opened the same day.

The first trust meeting had been held on February 28th, chaired by Rev. S. Griffith (Te Aroha), with Rev. J. W. Burton (Paeroa) also present. The original trustees were

Messrs. R. Trembath, P. Williams. T. J. Roach, T. Leggo, J. Brown and J. C. Allen. That these men carried out their duties faithfully and well is evidenced by the fact that the building then erected for approximately £300, and enlarged in 1913, is our Wesley Church today.

Here are extracts from Trustee meeting of March 21st, 1898:

"Provision to be made for back door to church; decided . . . lamps to be hung on pulleys; also to order a case of kerosene and to have two wooden collection plates 'turned'. Organ catalogues were viewed, and decided that organ style 5509 in Wilcox and White's catalogue, price £22 10s 0d, be purchased."

This organ is still giving good service.

Rev. Wm. Beckett died in Melbourne on February 19th, 1956, and Dr. Burton resides in Australia. Mr Beckett's diary reads: "The Upper Thames Circuit after applying for a Home Missionary and trying to get one, but without success, urged that a student be called from College." He arrived at Waihi on May 28th. During his ministry the evening congregations, which were the larger, averaged 180, and the church, seating 200, was often full. His stipend was fixed in June at £120 per annum.

We quote his diary again: "The first wedding ceremony in the church was performed on September 17th, 1898. The bridegroom was 73, the bride 58. The news of the wedding was kept quiet and only four were in the church when the service began, but the town got wind of it and some 40 or 50 came trooping in when about halfway through." A Bible was presented to the bride, who gave the pulpit draping and cushion.



Wesley Church 1898 (Rev. W. Beckett in doorway).

During that first year a mission was held by a Victorian evangelist. Rev. D. O'Donnell, at which 67 were converted. The first Sunday School anniversary was held on December 4th, 1898.

After two years, although invited to stay, Mr. Beckett was moved by Conference and succeeded by Rev. David Weatherall, during whose one year as minister Mr Elijah Stanway was received from Tauranga. Mr Stanway gave many years of service as a local preacher and as superintendent of the Sunday School. Miss Margaret Morgan succeeded Mr Caley as organist that same year (1900), and continued in office until her death 35 years later. Mr. Charles H Eustace, who had been received the previous year, was appointed a trustee. He also became a most acceptable Sunday School superintendent.

On June 26th, 1900, a Parsonage scheme was inaugurated, but was only completed at the end of 1903. After considerable discussion the section in Regent Street was deemed too small and the purchase of an adjacent half acre approved, only to be relinquished the following year after the minister had secured it on behalf of the Trust (and on £120 per annum!) The building was designed by Mr, W Tetley of Paeroa, and Mr. M. H. Hamilton's tender for £337 10s 0d was accepted, there being a debt of £200 at the time of opening. (Mr. W. S. Allen was a guarantor.)

In the meantime membership had gradually grown under the ministries of Rev. Clarence Eaton (1901-1903), a young and virile preacher fresh from Prince Albert College, and Rev. Colin C. Harrison (1903-1906), from 39 in 1899 to 98 in 1905, and there were over 30 choir members.

Mr. Harrison, one of the Rev. T. Champness' Joyful News Evangelists in England, was an effective if impetuous preacher. In August, 1905, Dr. Watson, from Pittsburg, U.S.A., conducted an 8-day mission in Wesley Church. Unusual notice was given by press to the subsequent revival. Rev. J. N. Buttle, of New Plymouth, at that time referred to the "extraordinary character of the movement which probably has no equal in the history of the Colony."

At the end of October, United Revival Meetings were still continuing on three evenings of the week in various churches. "*The Waihi Daily Telegraph*," of September 21st, records:

"New faces are to be seen at each meeting. Although meetings have been held nightly for six weeks the attendance keeps up splendidly. There is no novelty about the proceedings except it be a novelty to see men and women of all churches in dead earnest about the salvation of their families and neighbours. The time is spent in earnest prayer and testimony and singing. There is the continuous ring of sincerity to be noted. It is estimated that about 200 persons have publicly asked and received spiritual counsel and help. Meetings will be continued each night for some time to come."

From the revival a Mission Band was formed which preached in all parts of the circuit to the converting of many. Mr. Shepherd Allen provided transport for them. 1904 and 1905 saw the Revs. R E Evans (subsequently Presbyterian), M. J. Evans and W. Rowe from Waihi, and H. L. Richards, from Waikino, enter upon the work of the ministry.

During the ministry of the Rev. John Dukes (1906-07) kerosene lamps were done away with and gas was installed in the Church and water laid on. When he was appointed to Te Aroha as superintendent the following year, he was followed by the Rev. Thomas W. Newbold, and again after one year, by the Rev. James Wrigley (1908-11), during whose ministry Paeroa and Waihi separated from the Upper Thames Circuit, each to form its own circuit. It is interesting to note that gas was installed in the church before the parsonage, but in 1910 the latter step was taken, not without strict economy measures.

The same year was marked by additions to the Church at a cost of about £29 5s 0d, being the 25ft. by 12ft. lean-to vestry; £7 10s 0d was also spent on remodelling the choir and rostrum.

Increased congregations had often made it necessary to hold evening services in either the Academy of Music or the Thames Miners' Union Hall on special occasions. Now a scheme for enlarging the Church was considered. This had been mooted in 1905, but the first real move was the opening of a post office account with £20 in April, 1908. A committee of five was appointed in the following year, Mr Noel Carless, who had been prominent in the matter till then, being unable to act. By 1910 the trustees had planned a building to seat 350 people, at a cost of £800 but approaching Methodist Union cast its shadow before and the scheme was shelved.

Rev Arthur Hopper succeeded to the pastorate in 1911 for one year during which time a tennis court was laid alongside the church by the young men. Membership at this time was 99 for Waihi, with 11 at Waikino and 10 juniors. During his term bitter hostility to the Churches from the platform of militant atheistic socialism was concentrated on the Waihi miners, and incidentally prepared the way for the disastrous "strike." Soap-box orators at street corners were ably challenged by representatives of the churches. There were some defections from the churches, but in this time of trial Christian people of Waihi became stronger in their faith and witness. His successor, Rev. T. Fee, a man of massive build with a stentorian voice, carried the battle into the enemy's camp, and on the street corners effectively attacked the teachings of atheistic socialism. While all our ministers took their part in the fight against the liquor traffic, Mr Hopper and Mr Fee did so with much vigour.

Mr. Fee, who was completing his active ministry with one year in Waihi at the time of Union, supervised the local negotiations with the Primitive Methodist congregation, a report of which appears in the appropriate place.

Primitive Methodism 1895-1913

Primitive Methodism in New Zealand did not develop the intensive circuit systems found in the Wesleyan connexion. Thus it was that its leaders in Auckland and in the major mining town of Thames brought about the establishment of the Waihi Station. In November 1895, when Mr George P. Hunt came to Waihi as a hired local preacher working under the District Executive, the journey had to be made from Auckland by steamer, either to Paeroa or Thames, and thence by coach, a distance of 14 or 36 miles.



Rev. G. P. Hunt

Miss Sarah Evans had held services on June 29th of that year in the open air and in the Mission Hall (now St. James'), and these and weekly meetings at Bulltown continued. Occasional visits were paid by Rev. F. W. Boys, from Thames. Mr. Hunt held his first service in a blacksmith's shop where the Bank of New Zealand now stands. His labours were diligent and fruitful, and in June, 1896, we find him, by then a Home Missionary, chairing the first quarterly meeting of the Waihi Primitive Methodist Church Mission in the home of Mr. J. R. W. Nicholls. Also present were Messrs. Franks, Leggo and E. R. Mitchell. Much activity was already evident. Mr. J. Holloway, with whom the preacher lodged, was placed on the plan as an accredited local preacher; Owharoa and Komata were removed from the plan; and "Mr. Smith's offer to draw a plan of the church for nothing was accepted. That the size of the church be 25 x 35." (Note: Mr Smith failed to do this and Mr Holloway later obliged.)

Soon a section was secured above the present Salvation Army Hall, in Main Street, for £65, the Eden Terrace (Auckland) senior Christian Endeavour giving their £5 mission

prize to start a building fund, and releasing their minister to canvass for the same purpose. From September services were held in the Thames Miners' Union Hall (now Spearing's) until its destruction by fire in 1897, when organ, seats, books and documents were lost.

When Mr. Hunt left for training (February, 1897), he was followed by Rev. Wm. Woollass for a year. Some excavation was then done on the section. The removal of Mr. Nicholls to Thames was offset by the arrival of Mr. A. Cutforth, who was to become the treasurer of the Trust, and a Circuit Steward.

In 1898 the building fund received a fresh impetus under the leadership of the Rev. Samuel Barnett, culminating in the opening of Zion Church on 9th October, by the Rev. W. S. Potter, of Thames. The lower half of the Seddon Street site was sold for £50 and a new section was acquired in Rosemont Road (where the shop of J. P. Gamble, Ltd., now stands). Mr. J. Holloway, "trustee and society steward, erected a cosy and commodious edifice thereon. A fancy paling fence with double gates leads into a drive having a grass plot on either side leading up to the side doors of a spacious porch. The building itself is 36ft. by 25ft., with a 13ft. stud, having an open roof. . . . The exterior ... a French grey with shaded points. The interior is oiled and the dado varnished."

The balance sheet shows the following items:

- Purchase of new site, £55 0s 0d.
- Builder's account, £171 0s 0d.
- Furnishing and Incidentals, £27 18s 0d.

In his report of the opening the Rev. C. E. Ward exonerated Mr. Hunt from any responsibility concerning the purchase of the unsuitable site in "Main Street."

The Mayor of Auckland, Mr. David Goldie, at one time President of the Primitive Methodist Conference, conducted the first anniversary services, and on that occasion a Service of Song, "The Californian Nugget," was rendered. It was Mr. Goldie who presented the pulpit Bible, and had obligingly bought the unwanted shop on part of the old section. The other part of the "Main Street" section was sold to Isaac Brown, of Thames.

In 1899 we find that Paeroa, Komata and Karangahake ceased to be preaching places and Waimata was opened. The names of A. Katz, J. Gallagher and F. Seymour appear as trustees at this time. Mr. Barnett organised a choir and we trace the beginning of a life of faithful service in the appointment of Miss Margaret Morgan as organist. The matter of a residence for the minister was faced and a lean-to building was erected for about £110 on a section in Adams Street, not however, it appears, with the unanimous approval of the Quarterly Board, where one negative and two neutral votes were

recorded. At the first meeting held in the Parsonage Mr. Holloway was granted permission to buy a stove—"cost not over £5."

Mr. Barnett also went forward as a candidate for the ministry and was succeeded by Rev. Jacob Featherston, who served one year (1900-01) before being transferred on acceptance into the full ministry.

The Rev. John Olphert, who for three years gave outstanding service to the community as well as to the Church (1901-04) was the first ordained minister. Only the inadequacy of the parsonage ended the term of his first Waihi pastorate. With only 50 members, the church was serving a much larger community at this time. In fact, it was necessary to secure the Academy of Music for Sunday evening services, and week-night services were often held from 1902. Even so, finance seems to have caused concern, and especially in 1903 a series of varied efforts was made to wipe out debts. After holding two such efforts in each of three succeeding quarters, the deficit was reduced to £2 17s 7d.

Mr. Olphert served as chairman of both the Hospital Board and the School Committee. That he was of an active disposition is proved by his riding a bicycle to and from the 1904 Conference at Wanganui! The following summary from the "*Waihi Daily Telegraph*" in 1904 depicts graphically the strain attending his departure:

February 28th: Farewell services held. 7 p.m., Large attendance at the Academy of Music.

February 29th: Farewell tea in Miners' Hall by Primitive Methodists with other ministers present and speaking. Also gift from Katikati presented.

March 2nd: Illuminated address presented by public at Academy of Music, depicting Hospital Building, trustees, staff, etc.

March 3rd: Rev. J. Olphert sick in bed.

Before his departure Mr. Olphert set in motion the disposal of the Rosemont Road site, and by October his successor, Rev. John Southern, had re-opened the Church on its new Kenny Street section, next to Mr. W. E. Roberts bakery. As the section to a bookseller and stationer for £500, "the front fence to be left on the section and Mr. Livesey to pay for other things on the section," the removal to even a larger (acre) section was profitable.

After two years Mr. Southern was moved and the Rev. T. R. B. Woolloxall (Tommy Hall of Thames Vaudeville) entered upon a profitable three years' ministry (1906-09). At this time the Station was frequently reported as "prosperous," indicating that the officials placed spiritual prosperity above financial. Services were begun at Katikati No. 1 School, Bowentown and Waihi Beach, the last being surely an early venture of

faith. The preacher of today wonders how the following minute was acted upon: "That arrangements be made to hold a service at Bowentown during the holiday season, but no vehicle be hired for Sunday."

Mr. Woolloxall declining an invitation to remain a fourth year, Conference appointed Rev. Arch. A. Armstrong to labour during the next two years. Membership, coinciding with peak employment and gold production, was now at its highest, reaching 66 in March, 1910.



Wesley Hall 1956 – Originally Zion Primitive Methodist Church.

By September, 1912, after the disastrous "strike" only 24 members remained. It was earlier hoped that a more adequate parsonage might be erected than the lean-to cottage in Adams Street, and arrangements were made for the mortgage debt on the church property to be increased, but the resignation of Mr. Armstrong early in 1911, and the subsequent uncertainty and decline caused the scheme to be dropped.

The conditions under which Rev. F. Thompson laboured during 1911 and 1912 were far from encouraging. The deficit steadily increased and general slump conditions in the town caused the officials to apply for connexional aid. The parsonage furniture and extra church organ were sold to meet salary deficit; nevertheless the circuit could not support even an unmarried agent. At this time Mr. Thompson retired from the work and no further appointment was made.

Negotiating the Union 1912-1914

The prospect of New Zealand Union of the two branches of Methodism coming at a time when the mining industry had passed its peak to leave an unsettled decade, was regarded by some as a happy way out of many difficulties. The Primitive Methodist Church had suffered more by removals at the time of the "strike" than the Wesleyan Church, and the resignation of two successive agents had not eased the strain for them. Wesleyan property, while, less in extent, was in much better state of repair. With Wesleyans outnumbering them approximately four to one, some of the Primitive Methodists were not entirely happy about union, or as they called it, "absorption" into the larger communion.

In an Addendum to the Station Report dated September 23rd, 1912, the Rev. G. P. Hunt, of Thames, said:

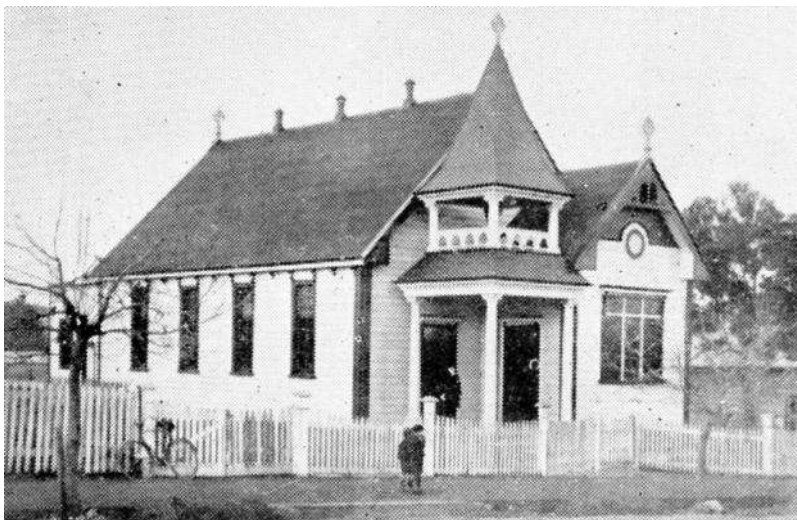
"On Thursday, September 12th, a united conference with the Hazard Street Methodist officials was held, the Rev. T. Fee presiding, and the Revs. J. Cocker and G. P. Hunt being present. It was unanimously decided to amalgamate the two Waihi Methodist Circuits and that the Kenny Street Church building be used as a schoolroom. Arrangements were made for the Rev. G. P. Hunt to conduct closing services at Kenny Street on Sunday, September 22nd, and for the two schools to be united on the afternoon of the same day.

"We have to report that these arrangements have been approved by our Quarterly Board and carried out. There were about nine persons at the Sunday morning service and about 60 at the evening service. About 16 Primitive Methodist children attended the afternoon children's service when short addresses were delivered by Rev T. Fee and Rev. G. P. Hunt, and Messrs Eustace and W. Thompson, superintendents of the two schools. Four Primitive Methodist teachers were present. On Monday evening, 23rd, a united social was held and there was a large attendance. The Rev. G. P. Hunt officiated and introduced the Rev. T. Fee as first pastor of the Waihi United Methodist Church. A good feeling prevailed and the hope was expressed that the union of the two churches will result in much good to all concerned and in the furtherance of Christ's Kingdom."

Thus the Rev. G. P. Hunt began and concluded the separate Primitive Methodist work in Waihi.

Following a report by a special committee of the Trust concerning Primitive Methodist property, the names of two trustees from that church were added: Messrs. E. R. Mitchel and T. Snow. Income from the sale of hymnbooks and rent of cottages was applied to paying interest on the Kenny Street property loan.

The consolidation thus effected paved the way for reconsideration of enlarged premises of worship and led by the Rev. T. G. Carr (1913-15) the trustees asked Mr. F. Souster, of Auckland, to draw up plans. In December, 1913, tenders were received, the lowest being that of Mr. H. Spencer, for the smaller scheme—" No. 2 plan with No. 1 front." The church was widened by 6ft. and the front porch and tower added for a total cost of £380. During alterations services were held in the Waihi Miners' Union Hall and the Kenny Street Schoolroom.



The enlarged Church, 1914. (Rev. T. G. Carr in doorway.)

With the re-opening of the enlarged church for worship on May 10th, 1914, by the Rev. T. G. Carr, a second stage of Waihi Methodism began.

The Difficult Years 1914-1935

While a Dominion-wide appeal in 1912 had greatly helped the Circuit financially, its effect was totally dissipated by the time of Union. However, on the completion of additions to the Church in 1914 at a cost of £380, only £100 was owing, and that to the Church Building and Loan Fund. There was also a Primitive Methodist loan of £150, borrowed from a member in 1907, not one penny of which had been repaid.

During the term of Mr. Carr's ministry Musical Competitions and Flower Shows were held by the Church, meeting with popular support and adding to the funds of the Circuit and Trust. At the 1915 Conference, Mr. Carr superannuated and was succeeded by the Rev. Percy J. Cossum. In the following year the first Forest Fair raised £36 for division between Trust and Circuit. At this time three small P.M. cottages were let for 16s weekly, the lot!

With the appointment of Rev. John Olphert for a second li-mi in 1917, a sub-committee was formed to investigate Trust property, The debt at September 30th was £261, and a series of Gift functions was arranged to reduce it. One of these in 1919, which aimed to raise £50 for debt reduction and £25 each for Circuit and renovations, brought in only a disappointing £31 2s 7d. However, at this time Mr. Eustace added a "wind-screen" at the Parsonage back-door, using material paid for by the ladies; and also a new range was installed.

Throughout the First World War the congregation, and more especially the ladies, contributed to the civic war effort; several young men served overseas; and the trustees provided an artistic Roll of Honour which was unveiled as early as April, 1916. With the Peace came also the 'Flu Epidemic, and the minister was to the fore in relief work, being in charge of the Technical School temporary ward for the six weeks it was open.

The next minister was the Rev. F. Greenwood (1920-22), who consolidated the work of the United Church in Haszard Street. The suggestion had already been made that the hall should be moved, the Sunday School to pay the estimated cost. However, the job cost much more and the money was provided by the Ladies' Guild (£52) and subscriptions collected by Mr. F. Paltridge (£47 10s 0d). To enable the long-standing P.M. mortgage to be paid the Adams Street property, was sold. A small area adjacent to the church section was bought for £20. Then in 1921 the hall was placed on wheels and tracks laid across Kenny Street and over the paddocks at the rear of the church. By anchoring a cable, first on the church site and later near the courthouse, the hall was worked into its new position. The Kenny Street section was later sold.

During Mr. Greenwood's term a serious conflict arose, and continued, between two members of the Quarterly Meeting, which might have caused disruption in the church but for the capability and firmness of the minister.

The first minister to remain in Waihi more than three years was Rev. Harry Cottom (1922-27). By the time of his arrival the Trust debt had been reduced to £122, and was paid off two years later; the membership had dropped to 89, and school roll to 70. In his first year Mr. Cottom was released for a brief period for Prohibition work. He and the members of the church were active supporters of the Ohinemuri No-License League, which had achieved its objective in 1908. Significant changes were taking place in personnel. Mr. Elijah Stanway died in 1922 and in the same year the Sunday School superintendent, Mr. C. H. Eustace, removed to Auckland. Two years later Mr. Robert Trembath, the oldest member who laid the foundation-stone of Wesley Church, passed to higher service.

Financially these were difficult days. In 1923, for the first time, the Circuit sought connexional assistance and a Home Mission grant of £40 was approved. Yet in the following year the handsome gift of £80 by the Ladies' Guild failed to balance the books. At the same time the Trust debt was being reduced at the rate of £60 per annum. The prospects did not improve when, in 1925, the Grand Junction Mine was closed, with a loss of approximately £70,000 a year in circulation in the town. Strong representations were made to the Home Mission department and the grant was increased to £80 to meet the distressing situation.

Through all these vicissitudes the spiritual life of the Church was maintained. The visit of the President of Conference, the Rev. A. Ashcroft, to conduct anniversary services in 1924 was much appreciated. In both the following years special missions were held by the Revs. A. M. Costain and J. Richards (1925) and J. E. Parsons (1926). And when the Mission Film, "*The Transformed Isle*," was shown in the latter year, the Miners' Hall was secured to cater for the crowd. It was then, too, that combined holiday services were first instituted with the Presbyterian Church, and later with the Baptist Church also.

Electricity was installed in the church in 1925, the cost being borne by the Circuit fund and a special offering was received on the occasion of its first use.

Towards the end of Mr. Cottom's term the officials were financially unable to support an ordained minister and requested the Conference to reduce the status of the Circuit to that of a Home Mission Station, with a grant of £40. This was done, and Rev. T. W. Featherstone (1927-32) appointed. Preaching places were opened at Waihi Plains and Waihi Beach. The Ladies' Guild was reorganised and soon a group of young people gathered to form a Bible Class. The Home Missionary had a great attraction for the young, and during his five-year stay a strong class was built up.

Much attention was given to the Parsonage property at this time. In addition to the help of the Guild towards painting, papering, plumbing, etc., the donation of dining and bedroom suites by Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Maunder (Waihi Beach) was greatly appreciated. The home of the Maunder family was also a welcome gathering-place for youth picnics. In 1929 the parsonage bathroom was repaired and enlarged and, at last,

a hand-basin, omitted originally to save £1, was installed. The following year electricity was installed there by the Busy Bee Club, replacing the two gas lights provided in 1910.

In 1930 a mission was conducted by the Rev. W. A. Burley.

Now the " Depression " was over the land and though not so badly hit as many places, Waihi could not raise its status again, and in 1932 Conference sent the Rev. Green Hall, who remained four years. In each year of his ministry except the first, a mission was held, missionaries being Trinity College students in 1933 and 1934, and Rev. G. I. Laurenson in 1935. During 1935 the country work was extended as far as Whangamata and Wharekawa, where the assistance of Mr. Lindsay Martyn was invaluable. For this trip Mr. Hall often went out by cream truck, returning on his bicycle. The recently-opened Community Church at Whangamata (December, 1955) owes much to his pioneering work.



Whangamata Community Church – opened Dec. 31, 1955

Mr. Hall laid to rest several members who had given years of service to the Church. Amongst these were Messrs: J. E. Haines and J. W. Tetley, former Circuit Stewards; Mr. George Christey, and Miss M. Morgan, organist 1898-1935, to whom a memorial tablet was erected in the Church.

The provision of electric heaters in the Church was not without its humour. An elderly trustee strongly opposed the move, asserting that "if we had enough fire within we should not need the outward heat." However, it was noticed that after their installation he moved nearer the front and close to a heater.

In 1936 Waihi was able to undertake again full Circuit status and Conference appointed a recently-ordained minister, the Rev. Reg. Day.

The Modern Circuit 1936-1956

With a steady membership of from 70 to 90, the Circuit reflected during the fifth and sixth decades the static conditions prevailing on account of constant uncertainty as to the future of the mine.

Amongst earlier members who continued through this period are: Mrs Paltridge, Mrs. Kirby, Mr. and Mrs. Langabeer, Mr. Watkins, Mr. Beeche, Mrs Thomas, Mr. And Mrs. Currie, Mr. and Mrs. Aitken, Mrs Foers, Mrs. George, Mrs. Saunders, Mrs. Fee, Mrs. Roberts, Mr and Mrs. Olphert and Mrs. Elliott. The Circuit looked to the Home Mission Department for frequent assistance, but throughout the years never again felt compelled to reduce status.

Mr. Day brought the enthusiasm of his youth and the impact of his personality to the task and during the five years of his ministry (1936-1941) the careful work of the "Home Mission" years brought forth fruit. Waihi Beach and Waimata appeared on L plan with Whangamata. Katikati was also investigated as a preaching place but after a year's trial, services were discontinued

In 1937 the 1st Waihi Company of the Boys' Brigade was formed under Mr. Day's captaincy and later in the year a camp was held. Although for some years in recess, the company has been revived and functions today. Mr. Victor Elliott is the present captain. Miss P. Grant was joined as Bible Class leader by Mrs E Stewart in 1939. Mrs. Stewart and her daughter had come from Te Aroha the previous year and while in Waihi exercised a gracious Christian influence, especially in cottage meetings in their home on Saturday evenings. Many young Christians found strength and inspiration there.

The remaining Primitive Methodist cottages were sold, and in 1939 the hall was repainted. A communion table was given anonymously in 1938.

The outbreak of war presented a direct challenge to many of the youth of the Church and several served in the forces. Mr. Day offered for Chaplaincy work and was called out in September, 1940. After a period of service he was invalided home and for a time farmed in Waihi until he re-entered the ministry.

During the summer of 1940-41, Student J. J. Lewis, from Trinity College, supplied the vacancy, thus relieving the local preachers who had so capably been maintaining the services. Conference appointed Rev. Wm. A. Watson to supply during the following year. Having been subject to indifferent health over many years, his year of service was a worthy contribution to the Circuit in an hour of peculiar need. In that year (1941) Mrs. L. Watkins, president of the Ladies' Guild for twelve years, and Mr. A. C. Thomas, a trustee of long standing and a local preacher, received the home-call.

A more settled ministry was achieved from the 1942 Conference which appointed the Rev. Arthur H. Ivory, LL.B., B.Com. Coming to the ministry later in life than most, Mr. Ivory's ministry was marked by the thoughtfulness of his sermons and addresses. He served at first as a probationer, but remained for a further year after his ordination in 1946. During these years the Centennial Fund was raised throughout the Dominion, Waihi contributing £313 8s 0d over four years.

Throughout the war years, in addition to keeping in touch with their own servicemen, the congregation sent food parcels to Rev. Wm. Lea (who was at Paeroa in 1912-14) for distribution in East London.

Services were instituted at Wharekawa and Hikuai, but attempts to re-open Whangamata were not successful. Transport was provided by members and later in Mr. Ivory's "green dragon" which, though aging, only failed twice on a difficult road. The Golden Jubilee was marked by the holding of the Ministerial Synod in Waihi in May, 1946, with Rev. G. P. Hunt as guest speaker. Synod also met at Waihi Beach in 1939.

The retirement of Mr John Willoughby from the office of Circuit Steward in 1944, after 24 years of consecrated service, closed an outstanding contribution to the life of the Circuit. This homely Irishman had kept the Circuit 'accounts through a time when a credit balance was 'a rarity, but he brought to the task, as to all, his simple faith and patient nature which won him a unique place in the Church. He was spared to serve in other ways for ten more years. Mr E. Gwyn Morgan was appointed in his place and continues in that office. Another whose cheerful interpretation of the Gospel in daily life left a sweet memory was Mr Ben Pascoe, trustee, society steward and life member of the choir, who died in 1945. As a member of the Hospital Board he went beyond the mere duty, visiting patients every Sunday to the very week of his death. In the following year Mr Sidney Elliott, a Cornishman who for some years had shown great devotion as a society steward, also passed on. In 1947 the death occurred of Mr John D. Saunders, who, with his family, rendered valuable service, encouraging the young people in musical activities at home and in the church.

Mr Ivory, a widower, was greatly assisted by his aged mother who died during his pastorate, having endeared herself to many. Before he left he re-married and Mrs Ivory was duly welcomed by the ladies of the Church. A great friend of Mrs Ivory senior was Mrs Forsyth, whose association with the Church reached back nearly 40 years/ Her funeral was one of Mr Ivory's last before he left. Mrs F. Paltridge, our senior member, and Major Bessie Forsyth, Salvation Army missionary to Ceylon (now retired), are her daughters.

The Rev. Wallace S. Neal came in 1947, and stayed three years. Difficulties of travel caused the services at Hikuai, Wharekawa and Whangamata to be dropped, except at

the latter place in the summer. Wesley Church received donations of two tables by Mrs Beeche and Mrs Stewart, and an organ stool by Mrs Thomas senior, and in the following year anonymously, an organ for the vestry.

The chief mark of the period was an increasing expression of inter-church co-operation. The "*Waihi Christian Quarterly*" was published by a representative committee and provided a worthy means of understanding between the churches. A combined Bible Class was formed with the Presbyterian Church, which still operates. Quarterly youth services by the Bible Class alternated between the two churches, and on such occasions the other church was closed. This culminated in a combined service in the Miners' Hall on October 30th, 1949, but the inter-denominational cordiality has continued to the benefit of all communions. This movement was in accord with the Church Union proposals submitted to the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches and which led up to the votes taken in 1948. In Waihi there was an overwhelming vote of 7 to 1 in favour of the proposed basis, the measure of co-operation already achieved locally influencing the vote.

The first mention of the Ladies' Fireside Club appears in 1948. This evening organisation has grown over the years, and after much generous assistance to the Ladies' Guild in the organisation of financial efforts, in 1955 became the Evening Guild.

Waihi Methodism appreciated and shared in the honour when the 1949 Conference elected Mr J. B. Beeche to the high office of Vice-President. Having been in the ministry for several years, he brought his experience and sympathy to a succession of pastors. His wide connexional outlook, as well as his interest in the local church, enabled him worthily to represent the circuit at Conference or Synod. Mr Beeche became a member of the Upper Thames Circuit at Paeroa in 1898, and as Waihi Trust Treasurer and Secretary continues in offices he has held since 1917 and 1919 respectively.

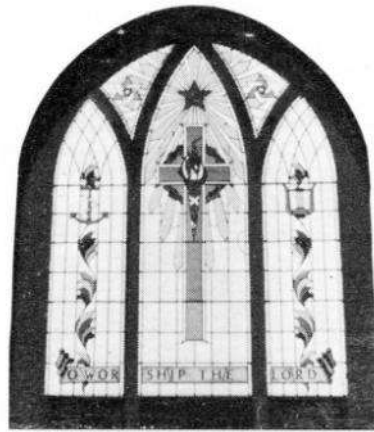
The fulfilment of our requests, being sometimes delayed, Conference appointed to the circuit in 1950 the minister whom Quarterly Meeting had invited three years earlier, Rev. A. Francis Attwood, who had recently been ordained after many years of service to the Church. The cost of living continued to rise, and already the stipend was £100 above the 1939 figure. However, the Home Mission grant of £80 in 1948 was steadily lessened until in 1955 it stood at £45. Services were reopened at Whangamata and Hikuai, and in addition Tairua and Waitawheta came on the plan. Mr Attwood was well received in these country areas, and the work he established continues. It was with regret that the circuit received news of his departure through ill-health at the end of his second year.

As far back as 1939 the Ladies' Guild had held two missionary meetings per year, at which the offering had gone to Missions, and had received and read the monthly M.W.M.U. Newsletters. Over many years Misses Mary and Margaret Morgan and Miss Caroline Christey had counted it, not sacrifice to contribute generously to missionary causes. In 1951 an evening Auxiliary of the Women's Missionary Union was formed.

The arrival of Rev. Douglas H. Burt in 1952 almost coincided with the final closing of the Martha mine and hence a critical stage in the life of the town. However, Methodist membership continued steady. The present pastorate has been marked by the passing of a number of key officials. Towards the end of Mr Attwood's ministry the town was shocked by the sudden passing of Murray Saunders, a young man of fine Christian character, who was a leader amongst church youth, choirmaster and morning organist. His popularity in the town was attested by the response accorded the installation of a memorial window over the pulpit. This window, in a frame made by his workmates, fittingly portrays his interest in youth and music within the Church, and incorporates the life-giving Cross as a central feature, and the text which previously was borne on a gothic arch behind the pulpit: "O Worship the Lord." It was dedicated on 23rd August, 1953.



Rev. D. H. Burt



Murray Saunders Memorial Window – dedicated Aug. 23, 1953

Three men who served the cause over many years were called home in the next three years. Mr. Frederick Paltridge, Circuit Steward since 1923, Sunday School

Superintendent since 1916, a kindly and gracious soul, died in December, 1952. For 50 years, Messrs John Willoughby and "Dick" Buddle had 'been associated with the work of the Church, and it was with a deep sense of fitness that they were laid to rest together in September, 1954. Of Mr Willoughby's service mention has been made. Mr Buddle was agent for the "*Methodist Times*" for over 40 years, a trustee and society steward, it could be said of him that, he loved the House of the Lord. From the estate of Mr Buddle a legacy of £100 was received by the trustees.



Mr. F. Partridge

With Mr Partridge's passing Mr H. Roberts became Circuit Steward and Mr W. E. Sexton School Superintendent.

The first issue of "*The Waihi Methodist*," a quarterly news sheet appeared in May, 1952. In accord with the 1953 Methodist Year of Evangelism, the Rev. N. W. Olds, of Te Aroha, conducted a mission in the church in conjunction with Mr Burt in the following May.

With the needs of modern youth, and the approach of the Diamond Jubilee before them, the trustees launched an enlargement scheme for the youth hall, and early in 1954 the congregation voted in favour of a project of approximately £1250 for a kitchen, two cloak rooms, and two class rooms along the southern side of the hall. An application was later made to the Church Building and Loan Fund Committee for a loan of £500 towards the cost. To date over £300 has been raised towards a Building and Maintenance fund, but the first charge upon the fund was for putting the present property in a good state of repair.

In the 'belief that the essential basis of all our work is found in "seeking His face," Annual Leaders' Retreats were instituted in 1954, prior to the first Quarterly Meeting of the year. This opportunity to review the year's programme proved valuable. A further step was taken in 1956 with the holding of quarterly Leaders' Meetings to deal with spiritual matters of the local society.

The Ladies' Guild

Tribute must be paid to the wives of ministers and other ladies of the church for their devoted service, the record of which is far from complete, although the service was faithfully rendered throughout the years. When ministers from Te Aroha and Paeroa came to Waihi prior to the building of the Mission Hall they held services in Mrs Trembath's kitchen, and when ministers were stationed in the town, she boarded them until the Parsonage was built. Her daughter, Mrs Steer, and Mrs Adams collected for the Mission Hall.

In 1901 it is recorded that the proceeds of a minister's welcome social are to go to the Ladies' Sewing Guild for parsonage bazaar; and that the Ladies' Sewing Guild is "to be given a free hand." The result is not stated! However, in 1908 the "Ladies' Guild was working," and in February, 1909, they sent £107, proceeds of a bazaar, to Mrs Allen in reduction of debt on parsonage. Only £33 remained owing.

In addition to many gifts to the Circuit fund, the Ladies' Guild has greatly assisted the trustees in meeting the cost of repairs to the parsonage and furniture for same, removal of hall to Haszard Street, repayment of loan, etc. Since 1932 they have organised garden parties in most years, and these have aided 'circuit and trust funds. Any mention of the sum of their giving compiled from our incomplete records would do the ladies a grave injustice, but over the past five years approximately £500 has been raised.

... and Finally

It but remains to anticipate the "Year of Jubilee" which will afford a backward look. If this record should provide a challenge in the faith and constancy of its characters that will lift us into the future, it will be worthwhile. Inasmuch as the Gold of Waihi is no longer produced, it has perished as a basis of life in the community . . . What of the trial of your faith, which is much more precious than of gold that perisheth?

List of Officials

MINISTERS

Wesleyan

(Upper Thames Circuit)

1898-1900 Rev. W. Beckett
1900-01 Rev. D. Weatherall
1901-02 Rev. C. Eaten
1902-03 Rev. R. P. Keall
1906-07 Rev. J. Dukes

Wesleyan

(Waihi Circuit)

1908-11 Rev. J. Wrigley
1911-12 Rev. A. Hopper
1912-13 Rev. T. Fee
1903-06 Rev. C. C. Harrison
1907-08 Rev. J. Wrigley

Primitive Methodist

1895 Mr. G. P. Hunt (Local Preacher)	1901-04 Rev. J. Olphert
1896-97 Rev. G. P. Hunt, H.M.	1904-06 Rev. J. Southern
1897-98 Rev. W. Woollass, H.M.	1906-09 Rev. T. R. B. Woolloxall
1898-1900 Rev. S. Barnett, H.M.	1909-11 Rev. A. A. Armstrong, H.M.
1900-01 Rev. J. Featherston, H.M.	1911-12 Rev. F. A. Thompson
	1912 Rev. B. Guymer (3 months)

United Church

1913-15 Rev. T. G. Carr	1936-41 Rev. R. Day (on active service 1940-41)
1915-17 Rev. P. J. Cossum	
1917-20 Rev. J. Olphert (2nd term)	1941 Student J. J. Lewis
1920-22 Rev. F. Greenwood	Rev. W. A. Watson
1922-27 Rev. H. Cottom	1942-47 Rev. A. H. Ivory, LL.B. B.Com.
1927-32 Rev. T.W. Featherstone, H.M.	1947-50 Rev. W. S. Neal
1932-36 Rev. G. Hall, H.M.	1950-52 Rev. A. F. Attwood
	1952- Rev. D. H. Burt

CIRCUIT STEWARDS

Prior to 1908 no Waihi members served as Circuit. Stewards of the Upper Thames Circuit.

1908-10 J. McIndoe and J. W. Tetley	1920 A. C. Thomas and J. P. Gamble
1911-12 W. Hicks and J. E. Haines	1921-22 J. Willoughby and A. Parry
1913-14 W. Hicks and J. E. Haines (United Church)	1923-44 J. Willoughby and F. Paltridge
1915-16 J. R. Lane and J. E. Haines	1945-52 F. Paltridge and E. G. Morgan
1917-19 C. Burt and J. W. Tetley	1953- E. G. Morgan and H. Roberts

STATION STEWARDS (Primitive Methodist)

1896-99 E. R. Mitchell	1908-09 J. H. Rose
1900-03 A. Cutforth	1910 J. Holloway
1904-07 H. McCarthney	1911 T. Snow
1907-08 W. Hunter	1912 E. Sharpe

TRUST SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS

Wesleyan

1898 Rev. J. W. Burtop	1906-07 J. Carless .
1898-1901 The Minister	1908-09 J. Carless and F. Ludwig
1902-03 The Minister and B. Bennie	1910 J. McIndoe and F. Ludwig
1904 The Minister and R. E. Evans	1911 E. Johnson and F. Ludwig
1904-05 The Minister and F. Paltridge	1912 J. R. Lane and F. Ludwig
1905-06 The Minister and A. Caley	

Primitive Methodist

1896 Administered by the Station Board
1898-1900 E. R. Mitchell and A. Cutforth
1900-03 A. Cutforth
1904-07 H. McCarthney and E. R. Mitchell
1908-09 J. H. Rose and W. Oates
1910 W. Oates
1911 W. Oates and E. Sharpe

United

1913-16 J. R. Lane and E. Johnson
1916-19 J. R. Lane and J. B. Beeche
1919 J. B. Beeche
1920 J. Currie and J. B. Beeche
1921- J. B. Beeche

SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Wesleyan	Primitive Methodist	United
(very incomplete)		
1896-? E. Stanway	1907 W. Bell	1912-15 C. H. Eustace
?-1904 J. Roberts	1912 W. Thompson	1916-52 F. Paltridge
1905-12 C. H. Eustace		1953-W. E. Sexton
1912-15 C. H. Eustace		

ORGANISTS

Wesleyan

1898-? Mrs Franklin
1900-12 Miss M. Morgan

Primitive Methodist

1896-98 Miss E. Voss
1898-99 Miss M. Morgan
1905-09 Miss G. Christie
1909-? Miss M. McCarthney

United

1912-35 Miss M. Morgan
1929-56 Miss V. Collier (now Mrs F. Tribble), Asst.
1935-36 W. H. Purvis, L. Wattam, Miss W. Hawkins (Assts.)
1936-55 Miss D. Saunders
1944-51 M. D. Saunders (Asst.)
1951-V. A. Elliott (Asst.)
1956 Miss R. Tribble (Acting)

CHOIRMASTERS

Wesleyan

1898-1906 Joseph Adams
1906-07 C. Rayner
1908 A. Williams
1908-09 R. R. Hawke
1910-12 W. Hicks

Primitive Methodist

1898 Miss E. Voss
1898-00 Rev. S. Barnoll
1900-04 A. Cutforth
1905 Waters
1909-10 P. Marks

United (incomplete)

1913-19 W. Hicks
1920-? J. F. Horn, W. L. Holdsworth
1932-36 Rev. G. Hall
1936-41 Rev. R. Day, Mrs J. Aitken
?-1951 M. D. Saunders
1954-55 Miss P. L. Gapper

PRESENT TRUSTEES

Messrs J. B. Beeche (secretary), F. W. Tribble, A. A. Thomas, E. G. Morgan, O. C. Madsen, O. C. Olphert, G. R. Scothern, H. Roberts, A. H. Attwood and V. A. Elliott.

SOCIETY STEWARDS, 1955-56

Messrs H. Roberts, O. C. Madsen, F. W. Tribble., F. K. Scothern and P. E. Pike.