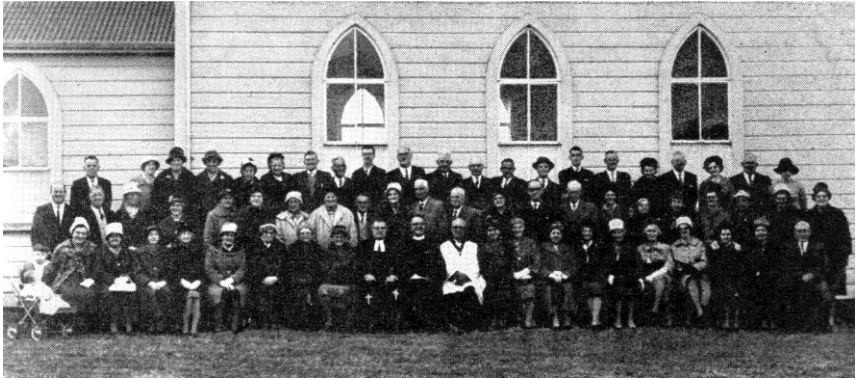


THE CHURCH IN OUR MIDST A Short History of the Ballance Church



THE 70th ANNIVERSARY GATHERING, 24/7/66.

A TRIBUTE FROM THE COMMUNITY

(Written, by request, by Mr. W. W. Day, Chairman of the Pahiatua County Council.)

Ballance was settled originally largely by families from Masterton and the Wairarapa. As in all early settlements, a school and education for the children, and a place to worship and express their faith for all, were the first and main essentials.

This district has been fortunate in that quite a large proportion of the present families have links that go back to the early years. The Church has held a continuing and important place in their lives. This leads to the sound community we have today — with pride in the past, and faith for the future.

My own association with the district goes back for comparatively few years, but Ballance is a community to which I am proud to belong.

W. W. DAY,

“Fernhills”, Ballance.

SEVENTY YEARS ONWARD

The Ballance settlement, eight miles distant from Pahiatua and from Woodville, was still in its primitive state when the first Service of Worship was held there. It was held in July, 1890, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Sinclair. The same house is still the Sinclair family home. The Service was the first public gathering of the pioneer settlers.

Worship was led by the Methodist Minister from Woodville, who crossed the Mangahao River and came up the track from Tait’s Ford. As it was winter, and the bush tracks were in poor condition, it was decided to postpone the holding of any

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more Services till summer. Before the next Christmas regular Services began and were transferred to the school when it was completed in 1892.

BUILDING THE CHURCH

By this time, Anglican and Presbyterian Ministers from Pahiatua had joined Methodist Ministers from Woodville and Pahiatua in conducting Services. Soon there was a movement afoot to build a Church. Being at the time the strongest denomination, the Methodist people took the initiative and in November, 1892 accepted with appreciation the gift of a township $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre section from Mr. Charles Holdaway, himself a Presbyterian. Several years then passed without any further action being taken.

However, the year 1896 proved an eventful one. It saw the opening of the Mangahao Bridge, the last needed link in a good road to Pahiatua, the completion of the Ballance Community Hall, and the building of the Church. It had been expected that the Church would be built in a day, and volunteer helpers bent all their energies to accomplish this. They were not quite successful, however, so the overseer, Mr. J. Jolly and Mr. J. Barnett as his assistant, were employed to complete the task.

THE OPENING

Opening day was Sunday, 26th July, 1896. Three services were held — those in the morning and afternoon being conducted by the Rev. James Wrigley, Methodist Minister of Woodville, and that in the evening by the Rev. J. W. Griffin, his colleague from Pahiatua. At each of these services the church was well filled by congregations from all sections of the community, the singing being led by a local choir specially got together and trained for the occasion.

At the Tea Meeting held on the following Wednesday, there were about two hundred present and Mr. Griffin took the opportunity to stress the fact that although vested in the care of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, the building was meant to be used by other denominations also.

Regarding finance, Mr. C. H. Robinson, Chairman of the Building Committee, stated that £30 had been borrowed from the Methodist Church Building and Loan Fund, £31 had come from local subscriptions, £3/18/- from social functions and £38/15/6 from Opening Day offerings. (Note: Though there is no record of the actual cost of the original building, its registration value is stated as £98/4/5.)

Although considered ample at the time of building, accommodation proved inadequate. In 1899 another £16 was borrowed and a vestry was added at a total cost of £48. Also lining, painting, varnishing and some other improvements were effected. Then in 1903 a stable and shed were built, fences were erected and a break-wind of trees was planted.

Within its first decade the Church was completed and was free of debt.

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PIONEERS, AT THE 70th ANNIVERSARY

Back Row: Bertha Cooper (Mrs. Hill), Laura Tait (Mrs. Garlick), Eva Brown, Jessie Sinclair.
Front Row: Flora Cody (Mrs. Rennie), Miriam Cody (Mrs. Powell), Mary Jolly, Alex Jolly, Ethel Heard (Mrs. Jackson).

Inset: Ann Sinclair (Mrs. Bibby).

THE CHURCH IN ACTION

For many years, and for many Ballance families, the life of the district revolved around the Church. Shortly after its opening, a spiritual revival broke loose and twenty young people decided to follow Christ. A Band of Hope and a Christian Endeavour Society were formed with alternating fortnightly meetings. In time these were allowed to lapse as were also a Young Peoples Guild, a Mutual Improvement Society, a branch of the W.C.T.U. and a Presbyterian Bible Class. Choir singing was, for many years, a special feature of the church services and in the life of the community. Many happy memories linger around the activities of the choir, especially when under the capable baton of School Master Mr. J. Williamson.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

A Sunday School, started in 1894, continued its work for forty- eight years. In 1900 it was said to be the largest undenominational Sunday School in New Zealand, with a roll of ninety children. In 1948, after a lapse of six years, another school was started by the Anglican Curate, the Rev. E. C. Barber. This school met monthly and was co-ordinated with family services. It continued for several years, then also lapsed. The

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present inter-denominational school was started in 1960 with a roll of over 50. It is sponsored by the Pahiatua Ministers' Association, and staffed by local volunteer teachers.

Anniversary Tea Meetings, always a popular feature of the Church's life and work, were regularly held for many years until about 1935 when they were discontinued. However, they have since been revived as a Sunday School Treat so that the Tea Meeting has once more taken its rightful place in the Sunday School calendar, and is eagerly looked forward to.



THE CHOIR IN 1906.

FAREWELL TO MR. & MRS. FRED HEARD AT MR. & MRS. J. WILLIAMSONS HOME.

THE CHOIR AS ABOVE:

Back Row (from left): Miss Edie Cooper (Mrs. Thomos), Fred Heard, Miss Bessie Cooper (Mrs. Underhill), Alex Jolly, Miss Minnie Foster (Mrs. Shute).

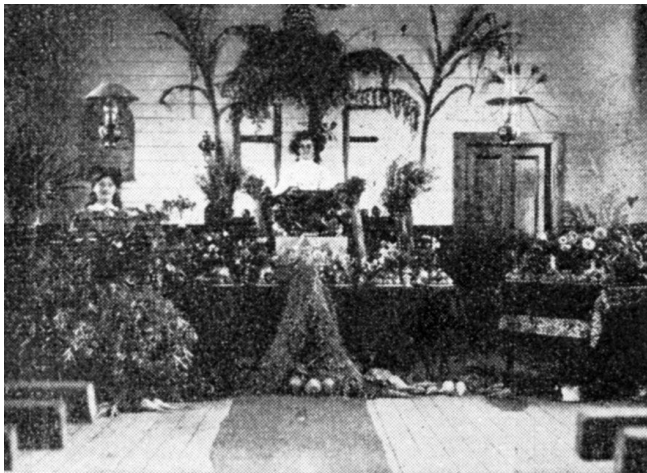
Middle Row: Mrs. Williamson, Mr. J. A. Sinclair, Mrs. Robinson Mr. Williamson, Miss Mary Sinclair (Mrs. Hopcroft), Mr. C. Robinson, Mrs. Heard, Miss Jean Jolly.

Front Group: Ann Sinclair (Mrs. Bibby), Jessie Sinclair, Elfa Robinson, Gwen Robinson.

CHANGING TIMES

The decline in church attendance of recent years has been reflected in the history of the Ballance Church. Although regular services are still held they have not been very well attended, and apart from the Sunday School there is no regular activity in connection with the Church. Yet in spite of this, interest in and generosity towards the maintaining of the building and the Cause itself remain strong.

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HARVEST THANKSGIVING, 1912. TWO YOUNG LADIES, MISSES ANN AND JESSIE SINCLAIR.

GENEROUS LOCAL INTEREST

The Trust Board comprises Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist members who work together harmoniously in maintaining the property. All the trustees turn out with other volunteer workers in force when a hard-working ‘bee’ is called for. This was in evidence twice recently when first, a dozen great macrocarpa trees were felled and removed and later, when a new fence was erected.

In 1939, a legacy of £100 was used to refurnish with new pews, a communion table and a pulpit chair. A further legacy of £50 came in 1958. Then in 1965 a donation of £50 from the Ballance Social Club was used to pay half the cost of materials for the new fence. Anniversary offerings of £70 in 1965 and £45 in 1966, were spent partly on new hymn books but mainly will be used for painting the church by voluntary labour.

ANNIVERSARIES

Ballance has always had a strong community spirit, and there exists a firm bond of friendship with those who have moved away. An enthusiastic response has always been forthcoming when any calls have been made for a get-together to celebrate the historic past.

In due course, the fiftieth, sixtieth and sixty-fifth anniversaries were adequately observed. Then, in 1965, a special celebration marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the holding of the first service. This proved so popular and was so well supported that folk from near and far asked for another gathering to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the opening of the church. This was held a year later on 24th July, 1966

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and again a large company of ex-residents and locals thoroughly enjoyed the thrills of meeting again. A photograph of the gathering is on the front page of this brochure.

THE FUTURE CALLS

Recently the emphasis that has arisen in all the Pahiatua district country areas on inter-denominational co-operation and fellowship has resulted in United House Fellowships and United Worship. These have brought some renewal of strength both to the Church and to the Community.

What the future holds for the Church of Jesus Christ in the world none can foretell. Our whole system of life is marked by, and depend on, change and it seems inevitable that changes must come into the form and structure of the Church and its worship. Meanwhile we go forward in faith. We seek to keep abreast o new developments yet hold fast to the eternal truths of the Gospel of Our Lord and Master. We try to express both in worship and ii our daily living the power of the Love of God. We seek to generate this Love in every circle of human life and thought.

What God has for us to do or to be in the future the Balance Church will gladly accept.



THE PRESENT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Back Row (from left): Mr. C. J. Croad, Mr. R. Corlett, Mr. W. L. Holdaway.

**Front Row: Mr. N. I. Chisholm, The Rev. C. L. Duder, Miss J. Sinclair, Mr. R. H. Croad
Mr. W. W. Day.**

Absent: Mr. L. A. Sinclair, Mr. R. L. McCallum, Mr. W. A. Carthew.

(Brochure compiled from data supplied by Miss Jessie Sinclair. It is hoped that it will both provide a link between past endeavours, the present, and the future, and bring a challenge to our continuing faithfulness.)