





Wesley Church interior combines modern design and building materials with the traditional values of worship.

## *Foreword*

**1912 - 1962**

**Now God Be Thanked. . .**

This is the story, told in photographs, of a Methodist congregation over a period of half a century.

It goes back to the building of the first Methodist Church in Papatoetoe in 1912. It covers the building of the new Wesley Church in 1962 and concludes with this Jubilee occasion. The story is a tribute to those hundreds of Methodist people, officials and ministers who have honoured God and served the church here over the past five decades.

The present congregation and officials are deeply conscious that they are, under God, 'watchers of a beacon whose light must never die.' This brochure is a sincere tribute to the past and a glowing testimony to the present. It should also be a spur of inspiration to Papatoetoe Methodists to accept worthily and gladly both the challenge and the opportunity this sixth decade of the century is presenting to the Christian Church. Never was the Gospel more relevant to human need than in this hour of our fiftieth anniversary.

*'Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour.'* — (Rupert Brooke)

**Papatoetoe Methodist Church 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 1912-1962**



**This worship centre is the focal point of the Department of Christian Education's programme for youth at Wesley.**



**Side rooms are used for individual class teaching by Sunday School teachers and Bible Class leaders.**

Papatoetoe Methodist Church 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 1912-1962



'We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock that he may be trained ... in the Christian Faith.'



The traditional warmth of Methodist fellowship extended towards friend or stranger is maintained at Wesley Church.

**Papatoetoe Methodist Church 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 1912-1962**



**Parents can bring their babies to Church to be looked after in a modern creche equipped with cots. Frequently children sleep through the whole time their parents are at worship.**



**The creche is competently staffed each Sunday by voluntary helpers who supervise the children's play activities while their parents are in Church.**

**Papatoetoe Methodist Church 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 1912-1962**



**The Primary Department is excellently equipped to hold the interest of young children while they learn Bible stories through expression work.**



**An aerial view of the first Church and Sunday School building just prior to the building of Wesley.**

## Early History

The outstanding fact about the first church erected in 1912 was that it was literally built in one day. Some 95 tradesmen and helpers took part in the great enterprise.

In days when money was not plentiful an architect was consulted who suggested a volunteer labour force for the erection of the structure.

A working committee was set up, plans were drawn and for three weeks willing workers gave up their Saturday afternoons and other spare time to prepare the foundations.

In an era when precut framing was unheard of the building materials for this church were cut and prepared for assembling. The material was of the best and cost something over £500 to purchase. The total cost with land included was £750.

On December 14, 1912, the volunteer labour force began to assemble a little before 4 a.m. in the morning. They arrived on bicycles, horses and the conveyances of the time. An early train from Auckland brought a contingent from the city.

The work began briskly but without undue haste and a great enthusiasm gripped the whole band of men. Some doubted whether in point of fact the whole project could be completed in a day but everyone was willing to make the attempt. A derrick was set up to hoist the principals into position and these were swung into their places at the rate of one every 10 minutes.

At 2 p.m. a flag was run up as the roof was completed by expert plumbers who put one side of the roof down in the record time of three quarters of an hour. As the afternoon wore on fitters were busily installing an acetylene lighting plant so that as darkness fell, the interior finishing work went on by artificial lighting.

By 10 p.m. the work was completed after 18 hours of almost non-stop activity. The cleaning up occupied some until just on midnight but the goal had been achieved: the Papatoetoe Methodist Church had been built in a day!

The first Sunday's services —three of them—were taken by the President of the Conference that year, the Rev. William Ready, at 11 a.m. (His text: "So built we the wall. For all the people had a mind to work." Neh. 4/6), by Mr. Fred Souster in the afternoon and in the evening by the minister of the Circuit, the Rev. W. Rowe, who is still living and is now in retirement in Wellington. Such is the epic story of Methodism's early days in Papatoetoe, a story that reflects vividly the vision, drive and determination of our fathers in the faith.

Papatoetoe Methodist Church 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 1912-1962



A 4 a.m. start. Foundations had already been laid and all was in readiness.



Within half an hour the framework was up.



Papatoetoe Methodist Church 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 1912-1962

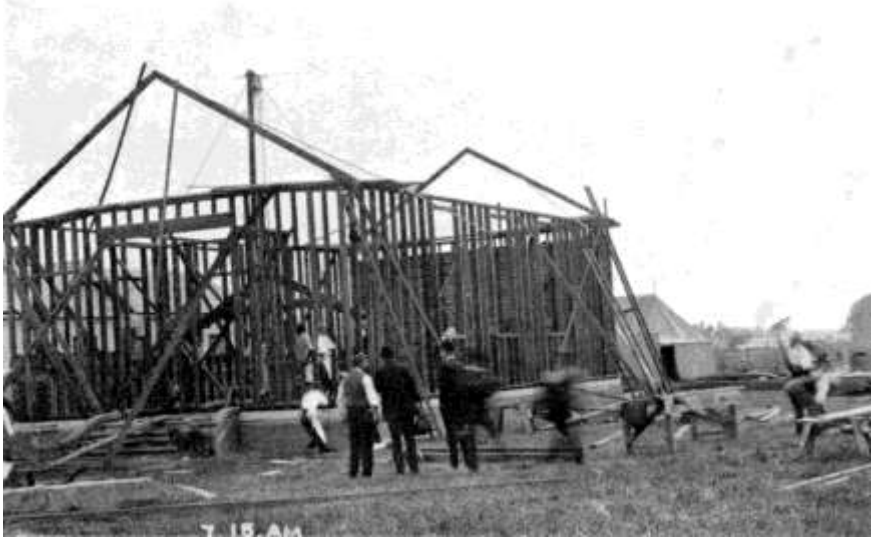


By breakfast time at 6 a.m. the framing was complete.



While the gable ends are erected other workmen start the weather-boarding. This view is from the back.

**Papatoetoe Methodist Church 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 1912-1962**

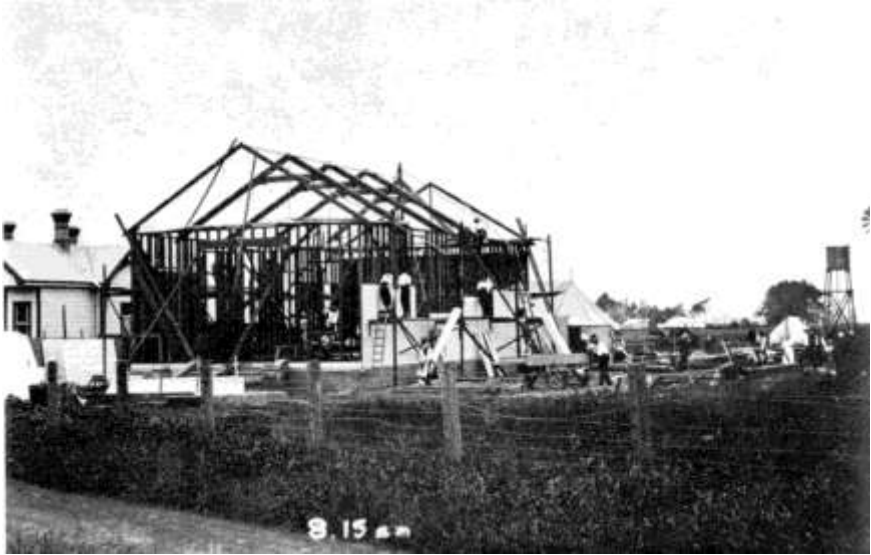


**A view from the front of the frame-work, and the derrick used to raise the principals into their positions.**



**Interested spectators watch the progress in the late afternoon while carpenters push on with the finishing work.**

Papatoetoe Methodist Church 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 1912-1962



By 8.15 a.m. the framing is complete and nearly all the principals are in position.



A brief pause for the photographer.

**Papatoetoe Methodist Church 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee 1912-1962**



**As evening approaches the work still goes on. Painters have followed the carpenters and a finished look is achieved as each set of scaffolding comes down.**



**The completed church: just eighteen hours continuous work!**

## *Postscript*

The record of these fifty years would be incomplete if it did not make humble acknowledgment of the fact that every advance and achievement to which it bears witness is the work of Christ in His Church. He is above all and through all and in all. It is fitting that the final word should be a summons to commitment to Him through the fellowship of the Church.

If you are not in active fellowship with Wesley Church, this time of the Jubilee, awakening as it does many memories and associations, is surely a most appropriate moment for a renewal of loyalties and a sharing again in the congregational life. The past, the present and the future call urgently for such a decision. All the facilities of Wesley Church for worship, fellowship, service and recreation are freely available to you and to your family. You will be made welcome among your fellow Methodists at Wesley, Kolmar Road.

